The Writings

of

OSCAR WILDE

Uniform Edition

Illustrated

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THE WRITINGS

OF

OSCAR WILDE

Poems in Prose

ILLUSTRATED

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1907

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Poems in Prose.

THE ARTIST.

One evening there came into his soul the desire to fashion an image of "The Pleasure that Abideth for a Moment." And he went forth into the world to look for bronze. For he could only think in bronze.

But all the bronze of the whole world had disappeared; nor anywhere in the whole world was there any bronze to be found, save only the bronze of the image of "The Sorrow that Endureth for Ever."

Now this image he had himself, and with his own hands, fashioned, and had set on the tomb of the one thing he had loved in life. On the tomb of the dead thing he had most loved had he set this image of his own fashioning, that it might serve as a sign of the love of a man that dieth not, and a symbol of the sorrow of man that endureth for ever. And in the whole world there was no other bronze save the bronze of this image.

And he took the image he had fashioned, and set it in a great furnace, and gave it to the fire.

And out of the bronze of the image of "The Sorrow that Endureth for Ever" he fashioned an image of "The Pleasure that Abideth for a Moment."

THE DOER OF GOOD.

It was night-time, and He was alone.

And He saw afar off the walls of a round city, and went towards the city.

And when He came near He heard within the city the tread of the feet of joy, and the laughter of the mouth of gladness, and the loud noise of many lutes. And He knocked at the gate and certain of the gate-keepers opened to Him.

And He beheld a house that was of marble, and had fair pillars of marble before it. The pillars were hung with garlands, and within and without there were torches of cedar. And He entered the house.

And when He had passed through the hall of chalcedony and the hall of jasper, and reached the long hall of feasting, He saw lying on a couch of sea-purple one whose hair was crowned with red roses and whose lips were red with wine.

And He went behind him and touched him on the shoulder, and said to him:

"Why do you live like this?"

And the young man turned round and recognised Him, and made answer, and said: "But I was a leper once, and you healed me. How else should I live?"

And He passed out of the house and went again into the street.

And after a little while He saw one whose face and raiment were painted and whose feet were shod with pearls. And behind her came slowly, as a hunter, a young man who wore a cloak of two colours. Now the face of the woman was as the fair face of an idol, and the eyes of the young man were bright with lust.

And He followed swiftly, and touched the hand of the young man, and said to him: "Why do you look at this woman and in such wise?"

And the young man turned round and recognised Him, and said: "But I was blind once, and you gave me sight. At what else should I look?"

And He ran forward and touched the painted raiment of the woman, and said to her: "Is there no other way in which to walk save the way of sin?"

"*Why do you live like this?*"

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And the woman turned round and recognised Him, and laughed, and said: "But you forgave me my sins, and the way is a pleasant way."

And He passed out of the city.

And when He had passed out of the city, He saw, seated by the roadside, a young man who was weeping.

And He went towards him and touched the long locks of his hair, and said to him: "Why are you weeping?"

And the young man looked up and recognised Him, and made answer: "But I was dead once, and you raised me from the dead. What else should I do but weep?"

THE DISCIPLE.

When Narcissus died, the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair, and cried to the pool, and said: "We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he."

"But was Narcissus beautiful?" said the pool.

"Who should know better than you?" answered the Oreads. "Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty."

And the pool answered: "But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw my own beauty mirrored."

And when the darkness came over the earth, Joseph of Arimathea, having lighted a torch of pinewood, passed down from the hill into the valley. For he had business in his own home.

And kneeling on the flint stones of the Valley of Desolation he saw a young man who was naked and weeping. His hair was the colour of honey, and his body was as a white flower; but he had wounded his body with thorns, and on his hair he had set ashes as a crown.

And he who had great possessions said to the young man who was naked: "I do not wonder that your sorrow is so great, for surely He was a just man."

And the young man answered: "It is not for Him that I am weeping, but for myself. I, too, have changed water into wine, and I have healed the leper and given sight to the blind. I have walked upon the waters, and from the dwellers

in the tombs I have cast out devils. I have fed the hungry in the desert where there was no food, and I have raised the dead from their narrow houses; and at my bidding, and before a great multitude of people, a barren fig-tree withered away. All things that this man has done I have done also. And yet they have not crucified me."

THE HOUSE OF JUDGMENT.

And there was silence in the House of Judgment. And the Man came naked before God.

And God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man: "Thy life hath been evil, and thou hast shewn cruelty to those who were in need of succour; and to those who lacked help thou hast been bitter and hard of heart. The poor called to thee and thou didst not hearken, and thine ears were closed to the cry of My afflicted. The inheritance thou didst take unto thyself, and thou didst send the foxes into the vineyard of thy neighbour's field. Thou didst take the bread of the children and give it to the dogs to eat, and My lepers, who lived in the marshes and were at peace and praised Me, thou didst drive forth on to the highways; and on Mine earth, out of which I made thee, thou didst spill innocent blood."

And the Man made answer and said: "Even so did I."

And again God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man: "Thy life hath been evil: and the Beauty I have shewn thou hast sought for, and the Good I have hidden thou didst pass by. The walls of thy chamber were painted with images and from the bed of thy abominations thou didst rise up to the sound of flutes. Thou didst build seven altars to the sins I have suffered and didst eat of the thing that may not be eaten, and the purple of thy raiment was broidered with the three signs of shame. Thine idols were neither of gold nor of silver that endure, but of flesh that dieth. Thou didst stain their hair with perfumes and put pomegranates in their hands. Thou didst stain their feet with saffron and spread carpets before them. With antimony thou didst stain their eyelids, and their bodies thou didst smear with myrrh. Thou didst bow thyself to the ground before them, and the thrones of thine idols were set in the sun. Thou didst shew to the sun thy shame and to the moon thy madness."

And the Man made answer and said: "Even so did I."

And a third time God opened the Book of the Life of the Man.

And God said to the Man: "Evil hath been thy life, and with evil didst thou requite good, and with wrong-doing kindness. The hands that fed thee thou didst wound, and the breasts that gave thee suck thou didst despise. He who came to thee for water went away thirsting, and the outlawed men who hid thee in their tents at night thou didst betray before dawn. Thine enemy who spared thee thou didst snare in an ambush, and the friend who walked with thee thou didst sell for a price, and to those who brought thee Love thou didst ever give Lust in thy turn."

And the Man made answer and said: "Even so did I."

And God closed the Book of the Life of the Man, and said: "Surely I will send thee into Hell. Even unto Hell will I send thee."

And the Man cried out: "Thou canst not."

And God said to the Man: "Wherefore can I not send thee to Hell, and for what reason?"

"Because in Hell have I always lived," answered the Man.

And there was silence in the House of Judgment.

And after a space God spake, and said to the Man: "Seeing that I may not send thee into Hell, surely I will send thee unto Heaven. Even unto Heaven will I send thee."

And the Man cried out: "Thou canst not."

And God said to the Man: "Wherefore can I not send thee unto Heaven, and for what reason?"

"Because never, and in no place, have I been able to imagine it," answered the Man.

And there was silence in the House of Judgment.

THE TEACHER OF WISDOM.

From his childhood he had been as one filled with the perfect knowledge of God, and even while he was yet but a lad many of the saints, as well as certain holy women who dwelt in the free city of his birth, had been stirred to much wonder by the grave wisdom of his answers.

And when his parents had given him the robe and the ring of manhood he kissed them, and left them, and went out into the world, that he might speak to the world about God. For there were at that time many in the world who either knew not God at all, or had but an incomplete knowledge of Him, or worshipped the false gods who dwell in groves and have no care of their worshippers.

And he set his face to the sun and journeyed, walking without sandals, as he had seen the saints walk, and carrying at his girdle a leathern wallet and a little water-bottle of burnt clay.

And as he walked along the highway he was full of the joy that comes from the perfect knowledge of God, and he sang praises unto God without ceasing: and after a time he reached a strange land in which there were many cities.

And he passed through eleven cities. And some of these cities were in valleys, and others were by the banks of great rivers, and others were set on hills. And in each city he found a disciple who loved him and followed him, and a great multitude of people also followed him from each city, and the knowledge of God spread in the whole land, and many of the rulers were converted, and the priests of the temples in which there were idols found that half of their gain was gone, and when they beat upon their drums at noon, none, or but a few, came with peacocks or with offerings of flesh, as had been the custom of the land before his coming.

Yet the more the people followed him, and the greater the number of his disciples, the greater became his sorrow. And he knew not why his sorrow was so great. For he spoke ever about God, and out of the fulness of that perfect knowledge of God which God had Himself given to him.

And one evening he passed out of the eleventh

city, which was a city of Armenia, and his disciples and a great crowd followed after him: and he went up on to a mountain, and sat down on a rock that was on the mountain, and his disciples stood round him, and the multitude knelt in the valley.

And he bowed his head on his hands and wept, and said to his soul: "Why is it that I am full of sorrow and fear, and that each of my disciples is as an enemy that walks in the noonday?"

And his soul answered him and said: "God filled thee with the perfect knowledge of Himself, and thou hast given this knowledge away to others. The pearl of great price thou hast divided, and the vesture without seam thou hast parted asunder. He who giveth away wisdom robbeth himself. He is as one who giveth his treasure to a robber. Is not God wiser than thou art? Who art thou to give away the secret that God hath told thee? I was rich once, and thou hast made me poor. Once I saw God, and now thou hast hidden Him from me."

And he wept again, for he knew that his soul spake truth to him, and that he had given to others the perfect knowledge of God, and that he was as one clinging to the skirts of God, and that his

faith was leaving him by reason of the number of those who believed in him.

And he said to himself: "I will talk no more about God. He who giveth away wisdom robbeth himself."

And after the space of some hours his disciples came near him and bowed themselves to the ground and said: "Master, talk to us about God, for thou hast the perfect knowledge of God, and no man save thee hath this knowledge."

And he answered them and said: "I will talk to you about all other things that are in Heaven and on earth, but about God I will not talk to you. Neither now, nor at any time, will I talk to you about God."

And they were wroth with him, and said to him: "Thou hast led us into the desert that we might hearken to thee. Wilt thou send us away hungry, and the great multitude that thou hast made to follow thee?"

And he answered them and said: "I will not talk to you about God."

And the multitude murmured against him, and said to him: "Thou hast led us into the desert and hast given us no food to eat. Talk to us about God and it will suffice us."

But he answered them not a word. For he knew that if he spake to them about God he would give away his treasure.

And his disciples went away sadly, and the multitude of people returned to their own homes. And many died on the way.

And when he was alone he rose up and set his face to the moon, and journeyed for seven moons, speaking to no man nor making any answer. And when the seventh moon had waned he reached that desert which is the desert of the Great River. And having found a cavern in which a centaur had once dwelt, he took it for his place of dwelling, and made himself a mat of reeds on which to lie, and became a Hermit. And every hour the Hermit praised God that He had suffered him to keep some knowledge of Him and of His wonderful greatness.

Now one evening as the Hermit was seated before the cavern in which he had made his place of dwelling, he beheld a young man of evil and beautiful face who passed by in mean apparel and with empty hands. Every evening with empty hands the young man passed by, and every morning he returned with his hands full of purple and

pearls. He was a robber, and robbed the caravans of the merchants.

And the Hermit looked at him and pitied him. But he spoke not a word. For he knew that he who speaks a word loses his faith.

And one morning, as the young man returned with his hands full of purple and pearls, he stopped and frowned and stamped his foot upon the sand, and said to the Hermit: "Why do you look at me ever in this manner as I pass by? What is it that I see in your eyes? For no man has looked at me before in this manner. And the thing is a thorn and a trouble to me."

And the Hermit answered him and said: "What you see in my eyes is pity. Pity is what looks out at you from my eyes."

And the young man laughed with scorn, and cried to the Hermit in a bitter voice, and said to him: "I have purple and pearls in my hands, and you have but a mat of reeds on which to lie. What pity should you have for me? And for what reason have you this pity?"

"I have pity for you," said the Hermit, "because you have no knowledge of God."

"Is this knowledge of God a precious thing?"

asked the young man, and he came close to the mouth of the cavern.

"It is more precious than all the purple and pearls of the whole world," answered the Hermit.

"And have you got it?" said the young Robber, and he came closer still.

"Once indeed," answered the Hermit, "I possessed the perfect knowledge of God. But in my foolishness I parted with it, and divided it amongst others. Yet even now is such knowledge as remains to me more precious than purple or pearls."

And when the young Robber heard this he threw away the purple and the pearls that he was bearing in his hands, and drawing a sharp sword of curved steel, he said to the Hermit: "Give me, forthwith, this knowledge of God that you possess, or I will surely slay you. Wherefore should I not slay him who has a treasure greater than my treasure?"

And the Hermit spread out his arms and said: "Were it not better for me to go unto the uttermost courts of God and praise Him, than to live in the world and have no knowledge of Him? Slay me if that be your desire. But I will not give away my knowledge of God."

And the young Robber knelt down, and besought

him, but the Hermit would not talk to him about God, nor give him his treasure, and the young Robber rose up and said to the Hermit: "Be it as you will. As for myself, I will go to the City of the Seven Sins, that is but three days' journey from this place, and for my purple they will give me pleasure, and for my pearls they will sell me joy." And he took up the purple and the pearls and went swiftly away.

And the Hermit cried out and followed him and besought him. For the space of three days he followed the young Robber on the road and entreated him to return, nor to enter the City of the Seven Sins.

And ever and anon the young Robber looked back at the Hermit and called to him, and said: "Will you give me this knowledge of God which is more precious than purple and pearls? If you will give me that, I will not enter the City."

And ever did the Hermit answer: "All things that I have, I will give thee, save that one thing only. For that thing it is not lawful for me to give away."

And in the twilight of the third day they came nigh to the great scarlet gates of the City of the

Seven Sins. And from the City there came the sound of much laughter.

And the young Robber laughed in answer, and sought to knock at the gate. And as he did so, the Hermit ran forward and caught him by the skirts of his raiment, and said to him: "Stretch forth your hands, and set your arms around my neck, and put your ear close to my lips, and I will give you what remains to me of the knowledge of God."

And the young Robber stopped.

And when the Hermit had given away his knowledge of God he fell upon the ground and wept, and a great darkness hid him from the City and the young Robber, so that he saw them no more.

And as he lay there weeping he was aware of One who was standing beside him; and He who was standing beside him had feet of brass and hair like fine wool. And he raised the Hermit up, and said to him: "Before this time thou hadst the perfect knowledge of God. Now thou shalt have the perfect love of God. Wherefore art thou weeping?"

And He kissed him.

The Priest and the Acolyte.

THE PRIEST AND THE ACOLYTE.

PART I.

"Pray, Father, give me thy blessing, for I have sinned."

The priest started; he was tired in mind and body; his soul was sad and his heart heavy as he sat in the terrible solitude of the confessional, ever listening to the same dull round of oft-repeated sins. He was weary of the conventional tones and matter-of-fact expressions. Would the world always be the same? For nearly twenty centuries the Christian priests had sat in the confessional and listened to the same old tale. The world seemed to him no better; always the same, the same. The young priest sighed to himself, and for a moment almost wished people would be worse. Why could they not escape from these old wearily made paths and be a little original in their vices, if sin they must? But the voice he now listened

to aroused him from his reverie. It was so soft and gentle, so diffident and shy.

He gave the blessing and listened. Ah, yes! he recognised the voice now. It was the voice he had heard for the first time only that very morning: the voice of the little acolyte that had served his Mass.

He turned his head and peered through the grating at the little bowed head beyond; there was no mistaking those long, soft curls. Suddenly, for one moment, the face was raised, and the large, moist, blue eyes met his; he saw the little oval face flushed with shame at the simple boyish sins he was confessing, and a thrill shot through him, for he felt that here at least was something in the world that was beautiful, something that was really true. Would the day come when those soft, scarlet lips would have grown hard and false? When the soft, shy treble would have become careless and conventional? His eyes filled with tears, and in a voice that had lost its firmness he gave the absolution.

After a pause he heard the boy rise to his feet, and watched him wend his way across the little chapel and kneel before the altar while he said his penance. The priest hid his thin, tired face

in his hands, and sighed wearily. The next morning, as he knelt before the altar and turned to say the words of confession to the little acolyte whose head was bent so reverently towards him, he bowed low till his hair just touched the golden halo that surrounded the little face, and he felt his veins burn and tingle with a strange, new fascination.

When that most wonderful thing in the whole world—complete soul-absorbing love for another—suddenly strikes a man, that man knows what heaven means and he understands hell: but if the man be an ascetic, a priest whose whole heart is given to ecstatic devotion, it were better for that man if he had never been born.

When they reached the vestry, and the boy stood before him reverently receiving the sacred vestments, he knew that henceforth the entire devotion of his religion, the whole ecstatic fervour of his prayers, would be connected with, nay, inspired by, one object alone. With the same reverence and humility as he would have felt in touching the consecrated elements, he laid his hands on the curl-crowned head, he touched the small, pale face, and raising it slightly, he bent forward and gently touched the smooth, white brow with his lips.

When the child felt the caress of his fingers, for one moment everything swam before his eyes; but when he felt the light touch of the tall priest's lips a wonderful assurance took possession of him: he understood. He raised his little arms, and, clasping his slim, white fingers around the priest's neck, kissed him on the lips. With a sharp cry the priest fell upon his knees, and, clasping the little figure clad in scarlet and lace to his heart, he covered the tender, flushing face with burning kisses. Then suddenly there came upon them both a quick sense of fear; they parted hastily, with hot, trembling fingers folded the sacred vestments, and separated in silent shyness.

The priest returned to his poor rooms and tried to sit down and think, but all in vain; he tried to eat, but could only thrust away his plate in disgust; he tried to pray, but instead of the calm figure on the cross, the calm, cold figure with the weary, weary face, he saw continually before him the flushed face of a lovely boy, the wide, star-like eyes of his new-found love.

All that day the young priest went through the round of his various duties mechanically, but he could not eat nor sit quiet, for when alone strange

shrill bursts of song kept thrilling through his brain, and he felt that he must flee out into the open air or go mad.

At length, when night came, and the long, hot day had left him exhausted and worn out, he threw himself on his knees before his crucifix, and compelled himself to think.

He called to mind his boyhood and his early youth; there returned to him the thought of the terrible struggles of the last five years. Here he knelt, Ronald Heatherington, priest of Holy Church, aged twenty-eight; what he had endured during these five years of fierce battling with those terrible passions he had fostered in his boyhood, was it all to be in vain? For the last year he had really felt that all passion was subdued, all those terrible outbursts of passionate love he had really believed to be stamped out for ever. He had worked so hard, so unceasingly, through all these five years since his ordination—he had given himself up solely and entirely to his sacred office; all the intensity of his nature had been concentrated, completely absorbed in the beautiful mysteries of his religion. He had avoided all that could affect him, all that might call up any recollection of his early life. Then he had accepted

this curacy, with sole charge of the little chapel beside the cottage where he was now living, the little missionary chapel that was the most distant of the several grouped round the old Parish Church of St. Anselm. He had arrived only two or three days before, and, going to call on the old couple who lived in the cottage, the back of which formed the boundary of his own little garden, had been offered the services of their grandson as acolyte.

"My son was an artist fellow, sir," the old man had said: "he never was satisfied here, so we sent him off to London: he was made a lot of there, sir, and married a lady, but the cold weather carried him off one winter, and his poor young wife was left with the baby. She brought him up and taught him herself, sir, but last winter she was taken, too, so the poor lad came to live with us—so delicate he is, sir, and not one of the likes of us; he's a gentleman born and bred, is Wilfred. His poor mother used to like him to go and serve at the church near them in London, and the boy was so fond of it himself that we thought, supposing you did not mind, sir, that it would be a treat for him to do the same here."

"How old is the boy?" asked the young priest.

"Fourteen, sir," replied the grandmother.

"Very well, let him come to the chapel to-morrow morning," Ronald had agreed.

Entirely absorbed in his devotions, the young man had scarcely noticed the little acolyte who was serving for him, and it was not till he was hearing his confession later in the day that he had realised his wonderful loveliness.

"Ah God! help me! pity me! After all this weary labour and toil, just when I am beginning to hope, is everything to be undone? am I to lose everything? Help me, help me, O God!" Even while he prayed—even while his hands were stretched out in agonised supplication towards the feet of that crucifix before which his hardest battles had been fought and won—even while the tears of bitter contrition and miserable self-mistrust were dimming his eyes—there came a soft tap on the glass of the window beside him. He rose to his feet and wonderingly drew back the dingy curtain. There in the moonlight, before the open window, stood a small white figure—there, with his bare feet on the moon-blanched turf, dressed only in his long, white nightshirt, stood his little acolyte, the boy who held his whole future in his small, childish hands.

"Wilfred, what are you doing here?" he asked, in a trembling voice.

"I could not sleep, Father, for thinking of you, and I saw a light in your room, so I got out through the window and came to see you. Are you angry with me, Father?" he asked, his voice faltering as he saw the almost fierce expression in the thin, ascetic face.

"Why did you come to see me?" The priest hardly dared recognise the situation, and scarcely heard what the boy said.

"Because I love you, I love you—oh, so much! but you—you are angry with me—oh, why did I ever come? why did I ever come? I never thought you would be angry!" And the little fellow sank on the grass and burst into tears.

The priest sprang through the open window, and seizing the slim little figure in his arms, he carried him into the room. He drew the curtain, and, sinking into the deep armchair, laid the little fair head upon his breast, kissing his curls again and again.

"O my darling! my own beautiful darling!" he whispered, "how could I ever be angry with you? You are more to me than all the world.

Ah, God! how I love you, my darling! my own sweet darling!"

For nearly an hour the boy nestled there in his arms, pressing his soft cheek against his; then the priest told him he must go. For one last, long kiss their lips met, and then the small, white-clad figure slipped through the window, sped across the little moonlit garden, and vanished through the opposite window.

When they met in the vestry next morning, the lad raised his beautiful, flower-like face, and the priest, gently putting his arms round him, kissed him tenderly on the lips.

"My darling! my darling!" was all he said; but the lad returned his kiss with a smile, of wonderful, almost heavenly love, in a silence that seemed to whisper something more than words.

"I wonder what was the matter with the Father this morning?" said one old woman to another, as they were returning from the chapel: "he didn't seem himself at all: he made more mistakes this morning than Father Thomas made in all the year he was here."

"Seemed as if he had never said a Mass before," replied her friend, with something of contempt. And that night, and for many nights

after, the priest, with the pale, tired-looking face, drew the curtain over his crucifix, and waited at the window for the glimmer of the pale summer moonlight on a crown of golden curls, for the sight of slim, boyish limbs clad in the long, white nightshirt, that only emphasised the grace of every movement, and the beautiful pallor of the little feet speeding across the grass. There at the window, night after night, he waited to feel tender, loving arms thrown round his neck, and to feel the intoxicating delight of beautiful boyish lips raining kisses on his own.

Ronald Heatherington made no mistakes in the Mass now. He said the solemn words with a reverence and devotion which made the few poor people who happened to be there speak of him afterwards almost with awe; while the face of the little acolyte at his side shone with a fervour which made them ask each other what this strange light could mean. Surely the young priest must be a saint indeed, while the boy beside him looked more like an angel from heaven than any child of human birth.

PART II.

The world is very stern with those that thwart her. She lays down her precepts, and woe to those who dare to think for themselves, who venture to exercise their own discretion as to whether they shall allow their individuality and natural characteristics to be stamped out, to be obliterated under the leaden fingers of convention. Truly, convention is the stone that has become head of the corner in the jerry-built temple of our superficial, self-assertive civilisation.

"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

If the world sees anything she cannot understand, she assigns the basest motives to all concerned, supposing the presence of some secret shame, the idea of which, at least, her narrow-minded intelligence is able to grasp.

The people no longer regarded their priest as

a saint, and his acolyte as an angel. They still spoke of them with bated breath and with their fingers on their lips; they still drew back out of the way when they met either of them; but now they gathered together in groups of twos and threes and shook their heads.

The priest and his acolyte heeded not; they never even noticed the suspicious glances and half-suppressed murmurs. Each had found in the other perfect sympathy and perfect love; what could the outside world matter to them now? Each was to the other the perfect fulfilment of a scarcely preconceived ideal; neither heaven nor hell could offer more. But the stone of convention had been undermined; the time could not be far distant when it must fall.

* * * * *

The moonlight was very clear and beautiful; the cold night air was heavy with the perfume of the old-fashioned flowers that bloomed so profusely in the little garden. But in the priest's little room the closely drawn curtains shut out all the beauty of the night. Entirely forgetful of all the world, absolutely oblivious of everything but one another, wrapped in the beautiful visions of a love that far outshone all the splendour of the summer

night, the priest and the little acolyte were together.

The little lad sat on his knees, with his arms pressed round his neck and his golden curls laid against the priest's close-cut hair; his white night-shirt contrasting strangely and beautifully with the dull black of the other's long cassock.

There was a step in the road outside—a step drawing nearer and nearer; a knock at the door. They heard it not; completely absorbed in each other, intoxicated with the sweetly poisonous draught that is the gift of love, they sat in silence. But the end had come: the blow had fallen at last. The door opened, and there before them in the doorway stood the tall figure of the rector. Neither said anything; only the little boy clung closer to his beloved, and his eyes grew large with fear. Then the young priest rose slowly to his feet and put the lad from him.

"You had better go, Wilfred," was all he said. The two priests stood in silence, watching the child as he slipped through the window, stole across the grass, and vanished into the opposite cottage.

Then the two turned and faced each other.

The young priest sank into his chair and clasped his hands, waiting for the other to speak.

"So it has come to this!" he said: "the people were only too right in what they told me. Ah, God! that such a thing should have happened here! that it has fallen on me to expose your shame—our shame! that it is I who must give you up to justice, and see that you suffer the full penalty of your sin! Have you nothing to say?"

"Nothing—nothing," he replied softly. "I cannot ask for pity: I cannot explain: you would never understand. I do not ask you anything for myself; I do not ask you to spare me: but think of the terrible scandal to our dear Church."

"It is better to expose these terrible scandals and see that they are cured. It is folly to conceal a sore: better show all our shame than let it fester."

"Think of the child."

"That was for you to do: you should have thought of him before. What has his shame to do with me? It was your business. Besides, I would not spare him if I could; what pity can I feel for such as he——"

But the young man had risen, pale to the lips.

"Hush!" he said in a low voice. "I forbid you to speak of him before me with anything but respect." Then softly to himself: "With anything but reverence; with anything but devotion."

The other was silent, awed for the moment. Then his anger rose.

"Dare you speak openly like that? Where is your penitence, your shame? Have you no sense of the horror of your sin?"

"There is no sin for which I should feel shame," he answered, very quietly. "God gave me my love for him, and He gave him also his love for me. Who is there that shall withstand God and the love that is His gift?"

"Dare you profane the name by calling such a passion as this 'love'?"

"It was love, perfect love; it *is* perfect love."

"I can say no more now; to-morrow all shall be known. Thank God, you shall pay dearly for all this disgrace," he added, in a sudden outburst of wrath.

"I am sorry you have no mercy—not that I fear exposure and punishment for myself. But mercy can seldom be found from a Christian," he added, as one that speaks from without.

The rector turned towards him suddenly, and stretched out his hands.

"Heaven forgive me my hardness of heart," he said. "I have been cruel; I have spoken cruelly

in my distress. Ah! can you say nothing to defend your crime?"

"No; I do not think I can do any good by that. If I attempted to deny all guilt, you would only think I lied; though I should prove my innocence, yet my reputation, my career, my whole future, are ruined for ever. But will you listen to me for a little? I will tell you a little about myself."

The rector sat down while his curate told him the story of his life, sitting by the empty grate with his chin resting on his clasped hands.

"I was at a big public school, as you know. I was always different from other boys. I never cared much for games. I took little interest in those things for which boys usually care so much. I was not very happy in my boyhood, I think. My one ambition was to find the ideal for which I longed. It has always been thus: I have always had an indefinite longing for something, a vague something that never quite took shape, that I could never quite understand. My great desire has always been to find something that would satisfy me. I was attracted at once by sin; my whole early life is stained and polluted with the taint of sin. Sometimes, even now, I think that there are sins

more beautiful than anything else in the world. There are vices that are bound to attract almost irresistibly any one who loves beauty above everything. I have always sought for love: again and again I have been the victim of fits of passionate affection: time after time I have seemed to have found my ideal at last: the whole object of my life has been, times without number, to gain the love of some particular person. Several times my efforts were successful; each time I awoke to find that the success I had obtained was worthless after all. As I grasped the prize, it lost all its attraction—I no longer cared for what I had once desired with my whole heart. In vain I endeavoured to drown the yearnings of my heart with the ordinary pleasures and vices that usually attract the young. I had to choose a profession. I became a priest. The whole æsthetic tendency of my soul was intensely attracted by the wonderful mysteries of Christianity, the artistic beauty of our services. Ever since my ordination I have been striving to cheat myself into the belief that peace had come at last—at last my yearning was satisfied; but all in vain. Unceasingly I have struggled with the old cravings for excitement, and, above all, the weary, incessant thirst for a perfect

love. I have found, and still find, an exquisite delight in religion: not in the regular duties of a religious life, not in the ordinary round of parish organisations—against these I chafe incessantly; no, my delight is in the æsthetic beauty of the services, the ecstasy of devotion, the passionate fervour that comes with long fasting and meditation."

"Have you found no comfort in prayer?" asked the rector.

"Comfort?—no. But I have found in prayer pleasure, excitement, almost a fierce delight of sin."

"You should have married. I think that would have saved you."

Ronald Heatherington rose to his feet and laid his hand on the rector's arm.

"You do not understand me. I have never been attracted by a woman in my life. Can you not see that people are different, totally different, from one another? To think that we are all the same is impossible; our natures, our temperaments, are utterly unlike. But this is what people will never see; they found all their opinions on a wrong basis. How can their deductions be just if their premises are wrong? One law laid down by the majority,

who happen to be of one disposition, is only binding on the minority *legally*, not *morally*. What right have you, or any one, to tell me that such-and-such a thing is sinful for me? Oh, why can I not explain to you and force you to see?" and his grasp tightened on the other's arm. Then he continued, speaking fast and earnestly:

"For me, with my nature, to have married, would have been sinful: it would have been a crime, a gross immorality, and my conscience would have revolted." Then he added bitterly: "Conscience should be that divine instinct which bids us seek after that our natural disposition needs—we have forgotten that; to most of us, to the world, nay, even to Christians in general, conscience is merely another name for the cowardice that dreads to offend against convention. Ah, what a cursed thing convention is! I have committed no moral offence in this matter; in the sight of God my soul is blameless; but to you and to the world I am guilty of an abominable crime—abominable, because it is a sin against convention, forsooth! I met this boy: I loved him as I had never loved any one or any thing before: I had no need to labour to win his affection—he was mine by right; he loved me, even as I loved him; from the first he was the nec-

essary complement to my soul. How dare the world presume to judge us? What is convention to us? Nevertheless, although I really knew that such a love was beautiful and blameless, although from the bottom of my heart I despised the narrow judgment of the world, yet for his sake and for the sake of our Church, I tried at first to resist. I struggled against the fascination he possessed for me. I would never have gone to him and asked his love; I would have struggled on till the end; but what could I do? It was he that came to me and offered me the wealth of love his beautiful soul possessed. How could I tell to such a nature as his the hideous picture the world would paint? Even as you saw him this evening, he has come to me night by night—how dare I disturb the sweet purity of his soul by hinting at the horrible suspicions his presence might arouse? I knew what I was doing. I have faced the world and set myself up against it. I have openly scoffed at its dictates. I do not ask you to sympathise with me, nor do I pray you to stay your hand. Your eyes are blinded with a mental cataract. You are bound, bound with those miserable ties that have held you, body and soul, from the cradle. You must do what you believe to be your duty. In

God's eyes we are martyrs, and we shall not shrink even from death in this struggle against the idolatrous worship of convention."

Ronald Heatherington sank into a chair, hiding his face in his hands, and the rector left the room in silence.

For some minutes the young priest sat with his face buried in his hands. Then, with a sigh, he rose, and crept across the garden till he stood beneath the open window of his darling.

"Wilfred!" he called very softly.

The beautiful face, pale and wet with tears, appeared at the window.

"I want you, my darling; will you come?" he whispered.

"Yes, Father," the boy softly answered.

The priest led him back to his room; then, taking him very gently in his arms, he tried to warm the cold little feet with his hands.

"My darling, it is all over." And he told him as gently as he could all that lay before them.

The boy hid his face on his shoulder, crying softly.

"Can I do nothing for you, dear Father?"

He was silent for a moment. "Yes, you can die for me; you can die with me."

The loving arms were about his neck once more, and the warm, loving lips were kissing his own. "I will do anything for you. O Father, let us die together!"

"Yes, my darling, it is best; we will."

Then, very quietly and very tenderly, he prepared the little fellow for his death: he heard his last confession and gave him his last absolution. Then they knelt together, hand in hand, before the crucifix.

"Pray for me, my darling."

Then together their prayers silently ascended that the dear Lord would have pity on the priest who had fallen in the terrible battle of life. There they knelt till midnight, when Ronald took the lad in his arms and carried him to the little chapel.

"I will say Mass for the repose of our souls," he said.

Over his nightshirt the child arrayed himself in his little scarlet cassock and tiny lace cotta. He covered his naked feet with the scarlet sanctuary shoes; he lighted the tapers and reverently helped the priest to vest. Then, before they left the vestry, the priest took him in his arms and held him pressed closely to his breast; he stroked the soft hair and whispered cheeringly to him. The

child was weeping quietly, his slender frame trembling with the sobs he could scarcely suppress.

After a moment the tender embrace soothed him, and he raised his beautiful mouth to the priest's. Their lips were pressed together, and their arms wrapped one another closely.

"Oh, my darling, my own sweet darling!" the priest whispered tenderly.

"We shall be together for ever soon; nothing shall separate us now," the child said.

"Yes, it is far better so; far better to be together in death than apart in life."

They knelt before the altar in the silent night, the glimmer of the tapers lighting up the features of the crucifix with strange distinctness. Never had the priest's voice trembled with such wonderful earnestness, never had the acolyte responded with such devotion, as at this midnight mass for the peace of their own departing souls.

Just before the consecration the priest took a tiny phial from the pocket of his cassock, blessed it, and poured the contents into the chalice.

When the time came for him to receive from the chalice, he raised it to his lips, but did not taste of it.

He administered the sacred wafer to the child,

and then he took the beautiful gold chalice, set with precious stones, in his hand; he turned towards him, but when he saw the light in the beautiful face he turned again to the crucifix with a low moan. For one instant his courage failed him: then he turned to the little fellow again and held the chalice to his lips.

"The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Never had the priest beheld such perfect love, such perfect trust, in those dear eyes as shone from them now; now, as with face raised upwards, he received his death from the loving hands of him that he loved best in the whole world.

The instant he had received, Ronald fell on his knees beside him and drained the chalice to the last drop. He set it down and threw his arms round the beautiful figure of his dearly loved acolyte. Their lips met in one last kiss of perfect love, and all was over.

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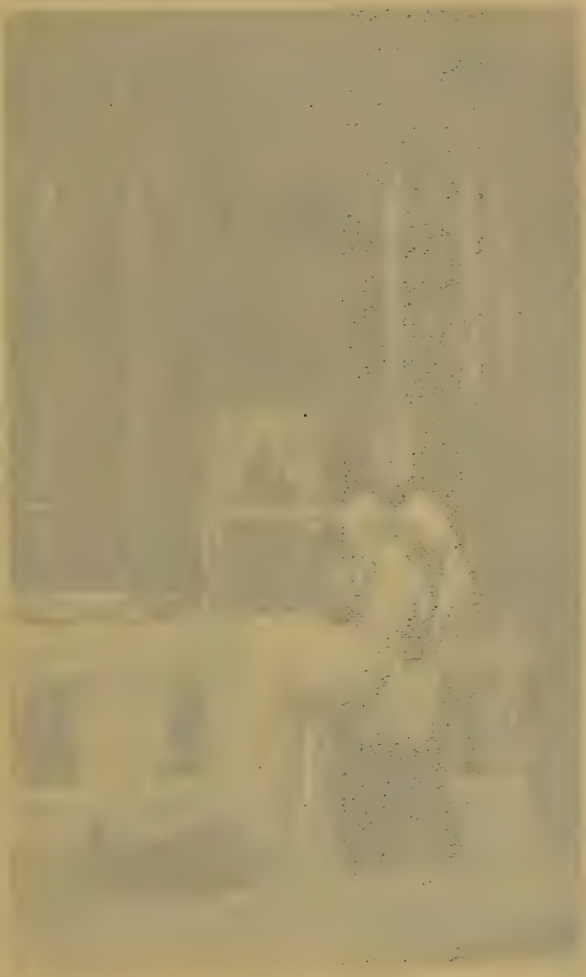
When the sun was rising in the heavens, it cast one broad ray upon the altar of the little chapel. The tapers were burning still, scarcely half-burnt through. The sad-faced figure of the crucifix hung



Threw his arms round the beautiful figu

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there in its majestic calm. On the steps of the altar was stretched the long, ascetic frame of the young priest, robed in the sacred vestments; close beside him, with his curly head pillowed on the gorgeous embroideries that covered his breast, lay the beautiful boy in scarlet and lace. Their arms were round each other, a strange hush lay like a shroud over all.

"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

X.

June, 1894.

Rose-Leaf and Apple-Leaf.

L'Envoi.

The following is a reprint of Mr. Oscar Wilde's Introduction (L'Envoi) to "Rose-leaf and Apple-leaf," a book of poems by Mr. Rennell Rodd, published in Philadelphia, U. S. A., in A.D. 1882.

ROSE-LEAF AND APPLE-LEAF.

L'Envoi.

Amongst the many young men in England who are seeking along with me to continue and to perfect the English Renaissance—*Jeunes guerriers du drapeau romantique,* as Gautier would have called us—there is none whose love of art is more flawless and fervent, whose artistic sense of beauty is more subtle and more delicate—none, indeed, who is dearer to myself—than the young poet whose verses I have brought with me to America; verses full of sweet sadness, and yet full of joy; for the most joyous poet is not he who sows the desolate highways of this world with the barren seed of laughter, but he who makes his sorrow most musical, this indeed being the meaning of joy in art—that incommunicable element of artistic delight which, in poetry, for instance, comes from what Keats called

the "sensuous life of verse," the element of song in the singing, made so pleasurable to us by that wonder of motion which often has its origin in mere musical impulse, and in painting is to be sought for, from the subject never, but from the pictorial charm only—the scheme and symphony of the colour, the satisfying beauty of the design: so that the ultimate expression of our artistic movement in painting has been, not in the spiritual visions of the pre-Raphaelites, for all their marvel of Greek legend and their mystery of Italian song, but in the work of such men as Whistler and Albert Moore, who have raised design and colour to the ideal level of poetry and music. For the quality of their exquisite painting comes from the mere inventive and creative handling of line and colour, from a certain form and choice of beautiful workmanship, which, rejecting all literary reminiscence and all metaphysical idea, is in itself entirely satisfying to the æsthetic sense—is, as the Greeks would say, an end in itself; the effect of their work being like the effect given to us by music; for music is the art in which form and matter are always one—the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression; the art which most completely realises for us the artistic

ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring.

Now this increased sense of the absolutely satisfying value of beautiful workmanship, this recognition of the primary importance of the sensuous element in art, this love of art for art's sake, is the point in which we of the younger school have made a departure from the teaching of Mr. Ruskin—a departure definite and different and decisive.

Master indeed of the knowledge of all noble living and of the wisdom of all spiritual things will he be to us ever, seeing that it was he who, by the magic of his presence and the music of his lips, taught us at Oxford that enthusiasm for beauty which is the secret of Hellenism, and that desire for creation which is the secret of life, and filled some of us, at least, with the lofty and passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with some message for the nations and some mission for the world, and yet in his art criticism, his estimate of the joyous element of art, his whole method of approaching art, we are no longer with him; for the keystone to his æsthetic system is ethical always. He would judge of a picture by the amount of noble moral ideas it expresses, but to us

the channels by which all noble work in painting can touch, and does touch, the soul are not those of truths of life or metaphysical truths. To him perfection of workmanship seems but the symbol of pride, and incompleteness of technical resource the image of an imagination too limitless to find within the limits of form its complete expression, or of a love too simple not to stammer in its tale. But to us the rule of art is not the rule of morals. In an ethical system, indeed, of any gentle mercy good intentions will, one is fain to fancy, have their recognition; but of those that would enter the serene House of Beauty the question that we ask is not what they had ever meant to do, but what they have done. Their pathetic intentions are of no value to us, but their realised creations only. *Pour moi je prefere les poétes qui fonts des vers, les médecins qui sachent guérir, les peintres qui sachent peindre.*

Nor, in looking at a work of art, should we be dreaming of what it symbolises, but rather loving it for what it is. Indeed, the transcendental spirit is alien to the spirit of art. The metaphysical mind of Asia may create for itself the monstrous and many-breasted idol, but to the Greek, pure Artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual

life which conforms most closely to the perfect facts of physical life also. Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus, or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence—by that selection of truth which we call style, and that relation of values which is the draughtsmanship of painting, by the whole quality of the workmanship, the arabesque of the design, the splendour of the colour, for these things are enough to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul, and colour, indeed, is of itself a mystical presence in things, and tone a kind of sentiment.

This, then—the new departure of our younger school—is the chief characteristic of Mr. Rennell Rodd's poetry; for, while there is much in his work that may interest the intellect, much that will excite the emotions, and many cadenced chords of sweet and simple sentiment—for to those who love Art for its own sake all other things are added—yet the effect which they pre-

eminently seek to produce is purely an artistic one. Such a poem as "The Sea King's Grave," with all its majesty of melody, as sonorous and as strong as the sea by whose pine-fringed shores it was thus nobly conceived and nobly fashioned; or the little poem that follows it, whose cunning workmanship, wrought with such an artistic sense of limitation, one might liken to the rare chasing of the mirror that is its motive; or "In a Church," pale flower of one of those exquisite moments when all things except the moment itself seem so curiously real, and when the old memories of forgotten days are touched and made tender, and the familiar place grows fervent and solemn suddenly with a vision of the undying beauty of the gods that died; or the scene in "Chartres Cathedral," sombre silence brooding on vault and arch, silent people kneeling on the dust of the desolate pavement as the young priest lifts Lord Christ's body in a crystal star, and then the sudden beams of scarlet light that break through the blazoned window and smite on the carven screen, and sudden organ peals of mighty music rolling and echoing from choir to canopy, and from spire to shaft, and over all the clear, glad voice of a singing boy, affecting one as a thing over-sweet, and striking just the right

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artistic keynote for one's emotions; or "At Lanuvium," through the music of whose lines one seems to hear again the murmur of the Mantuan bees straying down from their own green valleys and inland streams to find what honeyed amber the sea flowers might be hiding; or the poem written "In the Coliseum," which gives one the same artistic joy that one gets watching a handicraftsman at his work, a goldsmith hammering out his gold into those thin plates as delicate as the petals of a yellow rose, or drawing it out into the long wires like tangled sunbeams, so perfect and precious in the mere handling of it; or the little lyric interludes that break in here and there like the singing of a thrush, and are as swift and as sure as the beating of a bird's wing, as light and bright as the apple-blossoms that flutter fitfully down to the orchard grass after a spring shower, and look the lovelier for the rain's tears lying on their dainty veinings of pink and pearl; or the sonnets —for Mr. Rodd is one of those *qui sonnent le sonnet,* as the Ronsardists used to say—that one called "On the Border Hills," with its fiery wonder of imagination and the strange beauty of its eighth line; or the one which tells of the sorrow of the great king for the little dead child—well,

all these poems aim, as I said, at producing a purely artistic effect, and have the rare and exquisite quality that belongs to work of that kind; and I feel that the entire subordination in our æsthetic movement of all merely emotional and intellectual motives to the vital informing poetic principle is the surest sign of our strength.

But it is not enough that a work of art should conform to the æsthetic demands of the age: there should be also about it, if it is to give us any permanent delight, the impress of a distinct individuality. Whatever work we have in the nineteenth century must rest on the two poles of personality and perfection. And so in this little volume, by separating the earlier and more simple work from the work that is later and stronger and possesses increased technical power and more artistic vision, one might weave these disconnected poems, these stray and scattered threads, into one fiery-coloured strand of life, noting first a boy's mere gladness of being young, with all its simple joy in field and flower, in sunlight and in song, and then the bitterness of sudden sorrow at the ending by death of one of the brief and beautiful friendships of one's youth, with all those unanswered longings and questionings unsatisfied by which we vex, so use-

lessly, the marble face of death; the artistic contrast between the discontented incompleteness of the spirit and the complete perfection of the style that expresses it forming the chief element of the æsthetic charm of these particular poems; and then the birth of Love, and all the wonder and the fear and the perilous delight of one on whose boyish brows the little wings of love have beaten for the first time; and the love songs, so dainty and delicate, little swallow flights of music, and full of such fragrance and freedom that they might all be sung in the open air and across moving water; and then autumn, coming with its quireless woods and odorous decay and ruined loveliness, Love lying dead; and the sense of the mere pity of it.

One might stop there, for from a young poet one should ask for no deeper chords of life than those that love and friendship make eternal for us; and the best poems in this volume belong clearly to a later time, a time when these real experiences become absorbed and gathered up into a form which seems from such real experiences to be the most alien and the most remote; when the simple expression of joy or sorrow suffices no longer, and lives rather in the stateliness of the cadenced metre, in the music and colour of the

linked words, than in any direct utterance; lives, one might say, in the perfection of the form more than in the pathos of the feeling. And yet, after the broken music of love and the burial of love in the autumn woods, we can trace that wandering among strange people, and in lands unknown to us, by which we try so pathetically to heal the hurts of the life we know, and that pure and passionate devotion to Art which one gets when the harsh reality of life has too suddenly wounded one, and is with discontent or sorrow marring one's youth, just as often, I think, as one gets it from any natural joy of living; and that curious intensity of vision by which, in moments of overmastering sadness and despair ungovernable, artistic things will live in one's memory with vivid realism caught from the life which they help one to forget—an old grey tomb in Flanders with a strange legend on it, making one think how, perhaps, passion does live on after death, a necklace of blue and amber beads and a broken mirror found in a girl's grave at Rome, a marble image of a boy habited like Eros, and, with the pathetic tradition of a great king's sorrow lingering about it like a purple shadow, over all these the tired spirit broods with that calm and certain joy that one

gets when one has found something that the ages never dull and the world cannot harm; and with it comes that desire of Greek things which is often an artistic method of expressing one's desire for perfection, and that longing for the old dead days which is so modern, so incomplete, so touching, being, in a way, the inverted torch of Hope, which burns the hand it should guide; and for many things a little sadness, and for all things a great love; and lastly, in the pine wood by the sea, once more the quick and vital pulse of joyous youth leaping and laughing in every line, the frank and fearless freedom of wave and wind waking into fire life's burnt-out ashes, and into song the silent lips of pain—how clearly one seems to see it all, the long colonnade of pines, with sea and sky peeping in here and there like a flitting of silver; the open place in the green, deep heart of the wood with the moss-grown altar to the old Italian god in it, and the flowers all about, cyclamen in the shadowy places, and the stars of the white narcissus lying like snowflakes over the grass, where the quick, bright-eyed lizard starts by the stone, and the snake lies coiled lazily in the sun on the hot sand, and overhead the gossamer floats from the branches like thin, tremulous threads of gold—

the scene is so perfect for its motive, for surely here, if anywhere, the real gladness of life might be revealed to one's youth—the gladness that comes, not from the rejection, but from the absorption of all passion, and is like that serene calm that dwells in the faces of the Greek statues, and which despair and sorrow cannot disturb but intensify only.

In some such way as this we could gather up these strewn and scattered petals of song into one perfect rose of life, and yet, perhaps, in so doing, we might be missing the true quality of the poems; one's real life is so often the life that one does not lead; and beautiful poems, like threads of beautiful silks, may be woven into many patterns and to suit many designs, all wonderful and all different: and romantic poetry, too, is essentially the poetry of impressions, being like that latest school of painting, the school of Whistler and Albert Moore, in its choice of situation as opposed to subject; in its dealing with the exceptions rather than with the types of life; in its brief intensity, in what one might call its fiery-coloured momentariness, it being indeed the momentary situations of life, the momentary aspects of nature, which poetry and painting now seek to render for

us. Sincerity and constancy will the artist, indeed, have always, but sincerity in art is merely that plastic perfection of execution without which a poem or a painting, however noble its sentiment or human its origin, is but wasted and unreal work, and the constancy of the artist cannot be to any definite rule or system of living, but to that principle of beauty only through which the inconstant shadows of his life are in their most fleeting moment arrested and made permanent. He will not, for instance, in intellectual matters, acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting, nor yet will he desire that fiery faith of the antique time which, while it intensified, yet limited, the vision; still less will he allow the calm of his culture to be marred by the discordant despair of doubt or the sadness of a sterile scepticism, for—the Valley Perilous, where ignorant armies clash by night, is no resting-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the clear upland, the serene height, and the sunlit air—rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief, tinging his nature with the sentiment that still lingers about some beautiful creeds, and searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experi-

ence, when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret much that was once very precious to him. "I am always sincere," says Emerson somewhere, "as knowing that there are other moods." *"Les émotions,"* wrote Théophile Gautier once in a review of Arsène Houssaye, *"Les émotions ne se ressemblent pas, mais être ému—voilà l'important."*

Now this is the secret of the art of the modern romantic school, and gives one the right keynote for its apprehension; but the real quality of all work which, like Mr. Rodd's, aims, as I said, at a purely artistic effect, cannot be described in terms of intellectual criticism; it is too intangible for that. One can perhaps convey it best in terms of the other arts, and by reference to them; and, indeed, some of these poems are as iridescent and as exquisite as a lovely fragment of Venetian glass; others as delicate in perfect workmanship and as simple in natural motive as an etching by Whistler is, or one of those beautiful little Greek figures which in the olive woods round Tanagra men can still find, with the faint gilding and the fading crimson not yet fled from hair and lips and raiment; and many of them seem like one of Corot's twilights just passing into music, for not merely

in visible colour, but in sentiment also—which is the colour of poetry—may there be a kind of tone.

But I think that the best likeness to the quality of this young poet's work I ever saw was in the landscape by the Loire. We were staying once, he and I, at Amboise, that little village with its grey slate roofs and steep streets and gaunt, grim gateway, where the quiet cottages nestle like white pigeons into the sombre clefts of the great bastioned rock, and the stately Renaissance houses stand silent and apart—very desolate now, but with some memory of the old days still lingering about the delicately twisted pillars, and the carved doorways with their grotesque animals, and laughing masks and quaint heraldic devices, all reminding one of a people who could not think life real till they had made it fantastic. And above the village, and beyond the bend of the river, we used to go in the afternoon and sketch from one of the big barges that bring the wine in autumn and the wood in winter down to the sea, or lie in the long grass and make plans *pour la gloire, et pour ennuyer les Philistins,* or wander along the low, sedgy banks, "matching our reeds in sportive rivalry," as comrades used in the old Sicilian days; and the land was an ordinary land enough, and

bare, too, when one thought of Italy, and how the oleanders were robing the hillsides by Genoa in scarlet, and the cyclamen filling with its purple every valley from Florence to Rome; for there was not much real beauty, perhaps, in it, only long, white dusty roads and straight rows of formal poplars; but now and then some little breaking gleam of broken light would lend to the grey field and the silent barn a secret and a mystery that were hardly their own, would transfigure for one exquisite moment the peasants passing down through the vineyard, or the shepherd watching on the hill, would tip the willows with silver, and touch the river into gold; and the wonder of the effect, with the strange simplicity of the material, always seemed to me to be a little like the quality of these the verses of my friend.

OSCAR WILDE.

1882.

Some Cruelties of Prison Life.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The circumstance which called forth this letter is a woeful one for Christian England. Martin, the Reading warder, is found guilty of feeding the hungry, nursing the sick, of being kindly and humane. These are his offences in plain unofficial language.

This pamphlet is tendered to earnest persons as evidence that the prison system is opposed to all that is kind and helpful. Herein is shown a process that is dehumanising, not only to the prisoners, but to every one connected with it.

Martin was dismissed. It happened in May last year. He is still out of employment and in poor circumstances. Can any one help him?

February, 1898.

SOME CRUELTIES OF PRISON LIFE.

THE EDITOR OF THE *Daily Chronicle:*

SIR—I learn with great regret, through an extract from the columns of your paper, that the warder Martin, of Reading Prison, has been dismissed by the Prison Commissioners for having given some sweet biscuits to a little hungry child. I saw the three children myself on the Monday preceding my release. They had just been convicted, and were standing in a row in the central hall, in their prison dress, carrying their sheets under the arms previous to their being sent to the cells allotted to them. I happened to be passing along one of the galleries on my way to the reception room, where I was to have an interview with a friend. They were quite small children, the youngest—the one to whom the warder gave the biscuits—being a tiny little chap, for whom they had evidently been unable to find clothes small enough to fit. I had, of course, seen many children

in prison during the two years during which I was myself confined. Wandsworth Prison, especially, contained always a large number of children. But the little child I saw on the afternoon of Monday, the 17th, at Reading, was tinier than any one of them. I need not say how utterly distressed I was to see these children at Reading, for I knew the treatment in store for them. The cruelty that is practised by day and night on children in English prisons is incredible, except to those who have witnessed it and are aware of the brutality of the system.

People nowadays do not understand what cruelty is. They regard it as a sort of terrible mediæval passion, and connect it with the race of men like Eccelin da Romano, and others, to whom the deliberate infliction of pain gave a real madness of pleasure. But men of the stamp of Eccelin are merely abnormal types of perverted individualism. Ordinary cruelty is simply stupidity. It comes from the entire want of imagination. It is the result in our days of stereotyped systems, of hard-and-fast rules, of centralisation, of officialism, and of irresponsible authority. Wherever there is centralisation there is stupidity. What is inhuman in modern life is officialism. Authority is as destruc-

tive to those who exercise it as it is to those on whom it is exercised. It is the Prison Board, with the system that it carries out, that is the primary source of the cruelty that is exercised on a child in prison. The people who uphold the system have excellent intentions. Those who carry it out are humane in intention also. Responsibility is shifted on to the disciplinary regulations. It is supposed that because a thing is the rule it is right.

The present treatment of children is terrible, primarily from people not understanding the peculiar psychology of a child's nature. A child can understand a punishment inflicted by an individual, such as a parent or guardian, and bear it with a certain amount of acquiescence. What it cannot understand is a punishment inflicted by Society. It cannot realise what Society is. With grown people it is, of course, the reverse. Those of us who are either in prison or have been sent there, can understand, and do understand, what that collective force called Society means, and whatever we may think of its methods or claims, we can force ourselves to accept it. Punishment inflicted on us by an individual, on the other hand,

is a thing that no grown person endures or is expected to endure.

The child consequently, being taken away from its parents by people whom it has never seen, and of whom it knows nothing, and finding itself in a lonely and unfamiliar cell, waited on by strange faces, and ordered about and punished by representatives of a system that it cannot understand, becomes an immediate prey to the first and most prominent emotion produced by modern prison life—the emotion of terror. The terror of a child in prison is quite limitless. I remember once in Reading, as I was going out to exercise, seeing in the dimly lit cell, right opposite my own, a small boy. Two warders, not unkindly men, were talking to him, with some sternness apparently, or perhaps giving him some useful advice about his conduct. One was in the cell with him, the other was standing outside. The child's face was like a white wedge of sheer terror. There was in his eyes the mute appeal of a hunted animal. The next morning I heard him at breakfast-time crying, and calling to be let out. His cry was for his parents. From time to time I could hear the deep voice of the warder on duty warning him to keep quiet. Yet he was not even convicted of whatever little

offence he had been charged with. He was simply on remand. That I knew by his wearing his own clothes, which seemed neat enough. He was, however, wearing prison socks and shoes. This showed that he was a very poor boy, whose own shoes, if he had any, were in a bad state. Justices and magistrates, an entirely ignorant class as a rule, often remand children for a week, and then perhaps remit whatever sentence they are entitled to pass. They call this "not sending a child to prison." It is, of course, a stupid view on their part. To a little child, whether he is in prison on remand or after conviction, is a subtlety of social position he cannot comprehend. To him the horrible thing is to be there at all. In the eyes of humanity it should be a horrible thing for him to be there at all.

This terror that seizes and dominates the child, as it seizes the grown man also, is of course intensified beyond power of expression by the solitary cellular system of our prisons. Every child is confined to its cell for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four. This is the appalling thing. To shut up a child in a dimly lit cell for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four is an example of the cruelty of stupidity. If an individual, parent or guardian,

did this to a child he would be severely punished. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children would take the matter up at once. There would be on all hands the utmost detestation of whomsoever had been guilty of such cruelty. A heavy sentence would undoubtedly follow conviction. But our own actual society does worse itself, and to the child to be so treated by a strange abstract force, of whose claim it has no cognisance, is much worse than it would be to receive the same treatment from its father or mother, or some one it knew. The inhuman treatment of a child is always inhuman, by whomsoever it is inflicted. But inhuman treatment by Society is to the child the more terrible because there is no appeal. A parent or guardian can be moved, and let out the child from the dark lonely room in which it is confined. But a warder cannot. Most warders are very fond of children. But the system prohibits them from rendering the child any assistance. Should they do so, as Warder Martin did, they are dismissed.

The second thing from which a child suffers in prison is hunger. The food that is given to it consists of a piece of usually badly baked prison bread and a tin of water for breakfast at half-past seven.

At twelve o'clock it gets dinner, composed of a tin of coarse Indian meal stirabout, and at half-past five it gets a piece of dry bread and a tin of water for its supper. This diet in the case of a strong grown man is always productive of illness of some kind, chiefly, of course, diarrhœa, with its attendant weakness. In fact in a big prison astringent medicines are served out regularly by the warders as a matter of course. In the case of a child, the child is, as a rule, incapable of eating the food at all. Any one who knows anything about children knows how easily a child's digestion is upset by a fit of crying, or trouble and mental distress of any kind. A child who has been crying all day long, and perhaps half the night, in a lonely, dimly lit cell, and is preyed upon by terror, simply cannot eat food of this coarse, horrible kind. In the case of the little child to whom Warder Martin gave the biscuits, the child was crying with hunger on Tuesday morning, and utterly unable to eat the bread and water served to it for its breakfast. Martin went out after the breakfasts had been served and bought the few sweet biscuits for the child rather than see it starving. It was a beautiful action on his part, and was so recognised by the child, who, utterly unconscious

of the regulation of the Prison Board, told one of the senior warders how kind this junior warder had been to him. The result was, of course, a report and a dismissal.

I know Martin extremely well, and I was under his charge for the last seven weeks of my imprisonment. On his appointment at Reading he had charge of Gallery C, in which I was confined, so I saw him constantly. I was struck by the singular kindness and humanity of the way in which he spoke to me and to the other prisoners. Kind words are much in prison, and a pleasant "Good morning" or "Good evening" will make one as happy as one can be in solitary confinement. He was always gentle and considerate. I happen to know another case in which he showed great kindness to one of the prisoners, and I have no hesitation in mentioning it. One of the most horrible things in prison is the badness of the sanitary arrangements. No prisoner is allowed under any circumstances to leave his cell after half-past five P.M. If, consequently, he is suffering from diarrhœa, he has to use his cell as a latrine, and pass the night in a most fetid and unwholesome atmosphere. Some days before my release Martin was going the rounds at half-past seven with one

of the senior warders for the purpose of collecting the oakum and tools of the prisoners. A man just convicted, and suffering from violent diarrhœa in consequence of the food, as is always the case, asked this senior warder to allow him to empty the slops in his cell on account of the horrible odour of the cell and the possibility of illness again in the night. The senior warder refused absolutely; it was against the rules. The man, as far as he was concerned, had to pass the night in this dreadful condition. Martin, however, rather than see this wretched man in such a loathsome predicament, said he would empty the man's slops himself, and did so. A warder emptying a prisoner's slops is, of course, against the rules, but Martin did this act of kindness to the man out of the simple humanity of his nature, and the man was naturally most grateful.

As regards the children, a great deal has been talked and written lately about the contaminating influence of prison on young children. What is said is quite true. A child is utterly contaminated by prison life. But the contaminating influence is not that of the prisoners. It is that of the whole prison system—of the governor, the chaplain, the warders, the lonely cell, the isolation, the revolting

food, the rules of the Prison Commissioners, the mode of discipline, as it is termed, of the life. Every care is taken to isolate a child from the sight even of all prisoners over sixteen years of age. Children sit behind a curtain in chapel, and are sent to take exercise in small, sunless yards—sometimes a stone-yard, sometimes a yard at the back of the mills—rather than that they should see the elder prisoners at exercise. But the only really humanising influence in prison is the influence of the prisoners. Their cheerfulness under terrible circumstances, their sympathy for each other, their humility, their gentleness, their pleasant smiles of greeting when they meet each other, their complete acquiescence in their punishments, are all quite wonderful, and I myself learnt many sound lessons from them. I am not proposing that the children should not sit behind a curtain in chapel, or that they should take exercise in a corner of the common yard. I am merely pointing out that the bad influence on children is not, and could never be, that of the prisoners, but is, and will always remain, that of the prison system itself. There is not a single man in Reading Gaol that would not gladly have done the three children's punishment for them. When I saw them last it

was on the Tuesday following their conviction. I was taking exercise at half-past eleven with about twelve other men, as the three children passed near us, in charge of a warder, from the damp, dreary stone-yard in which they had been at their exercise. I saw the greatest pity and sympathy in the eyes of my companions as they looked at them. Prisoners are, as a class, extremely kind and sympathetic to each other. Suffering and the community of suffering makes people kind, and day after day as I tramped the yard I used to feel with pleasure and comfort what Carlyle calls somewhere "the silent rhythmic charm of human companionship." In this as in all other things, philanthropists and people of that kind are astray. It is not the prisoners who need reformation. It is the prisons.

Of course no child under fourteen years of age should be sent to prison at all. It is an absurdity, and, like many absurdities, of absolutely tragic results. If, however, they are to be sent to prison, during the daytime they should be in a workshop or schoolroom with a warder. At night they should sleep in a dormitory, with a night warder to look after them. They should be allowed exercise for at least three hours a day. The dark, badly ventilated, ill-smelling prison cells are dreadful for a child,

dreadful indeed for any one. One is always breathing bad air in prison. The food given to children should consist of tea and bread-and-butter and soup. Prison soup is very good and wholesome. A resolution of the House of Commons could settle the treatment of children in half an hour. I hope you will use your influence to have this done. The way that children are treated at present is really an outrage on humanity and common-sense. It comes from stupidity.

Let me draw attention now to another terrible thing that goes on in English prisons, indeed in prisons all over the world where the system of silence and cellular confinement is practised. I refer to the large number of men who become insane or weak-minded in prison. In convict prisons this is, of course, quite common; but in ordinary gaols also, such as that I was confined in, it is to be found.

About three months ago I noticed amongst the prisoners who took exercise with me a young man who seemed to me to be silly or half-witted. Every prison, of course, has its half-witted clients, who return again and again, and may be said to live in the prison. But this young man struck me as being more than usually half-witted on account of

his silly grin and idiotic laughter to himself, and the peculiar restlessness of his eternally twitching hands. He was noticed by all the other prisoners on account of the strangeness of his conduct. From time to time he did not appear at exercise, which showed me that he was being punished by confinement to his cell. Finally, I discovered that he was under observation, and being watched night and day by warders. When he did appear at exercise, he always seemed hysterical, and used to walk round crying or laughing. At chapel he had to sit right under the observation of two warders, who carefully watched him all the time. Sometimes he would bury his head in his hands, an offence against the chapel regulations, and his head would be immediately struck up by a warder, so that he should keep his eyes fixed permanently in the direction of the Communion-table. Sometimes he would cry—not making any disturbance—but with tears streaming down his face and a hysterical throbbing in the throat. Sometimes he would grin idiot-like to himself and make faces. He was on more than one occasion sent out of chapel to his cell, and of course he was continually punished. As the bench on which I used to sit in chapel was directly behind the bench at the end of which this

unfortunate man was placed, I had full opportunity of observing him. I also saw him, of course, at exercise continually, and I saw that he was becoming insane, and was being treated as if he was shamming.

On Saturday week last, I was in my cell at about one o'clock occupied in cleaning and polishing the tins I had been using for dinner. Suddenly I was startled by the prison silence being broken by the most horrible and revolting shrieks or rather howls, for at first I thought some animal like a bull or a cow was being unskilfully slaughtered outside the prison walls. I soon realised, however, that the howls proceeded from the basement of the prison, and I knew that some wretched man was being flogged. I need not say how hideous and terrible it was for me, and I began to wonder who it was who was being punished in this revolting manner. Suddenly it dawned upon me that they might be flogging this unfortunate lunatic. My feelings on the subject need not be chronicled; they have nothing to do with the question.

The next day, Sunday, 16th, I saw the poor fellow at exercise, his weak, ugly, wretched face bloated by tears and hysteria almost beyond recognition. He walked in the centre ring along with

the old men, the beggars and the lame people, so that I was able to observe him the whole time. It was my last Sunday in prison, a perfectly lovely day, the finest day we had had the whole year, and there, in the beautiful sunlight, walked this poor creature—made once in the image of God—grinning like an ape, and making with his hands the most fantastic gestures, as though he was playing in the air on some invisible stringed instrument, or arranging and dealing counters in some curious game. All the while these hysterical tears, without which none of us ever saw him, were making soiled runnels on his white, swollen face. The hideous and deliberate grace of his gestures made him like an antic. He was a living grotesque. The other prisoners all watched him, and not one of them smiled. Everybody knew what had happened to him, and that he was being driven insane —was insane already. After half an hour, he was ordered in by the warder, and, I suppose, punished. At least he was not at exercise on Monday, though I think I caught sight of him at the corner of the stone-yard walking in charge of a warder.

On the Tuesday—my last day in prison—I saw him at exercise. He was worse than before, and again was sent in. Since then I know nothing of

him, but I found out from one of the prisoners who walked with me at exercise that he had had twenty-four lashes in the cook-house on Saturday afternoon, by order of the visiting justices on the report of the doctor. The howls that had horrified us all were his.

This man is undoubtedly becoming insane. Prison doctors have no knowledge of mental disease of any kind. They are as a class ignorant men. The pathology of the mind is unknown to them. When a man grows insane, they treat him as shamming. They have him punished again and again. Naturally the man becomes worse. When ordinary punishments are exhausted, the doctor reports the case to the justices. The result is flogging. Of course the flogging is not done with a cat-of-nine-tails. It is what is called birching. The instrument is a rod; but the result on the wretched half-witted man may be imagined.

His number is, or was, A. 2. 11. I also managed to find out his name. It is Prince. Something should be done at once for him. He is a soldier, and his sentence is one of court-martial. The term is six months. Three have yet to run.

May I ask you to use your influence to have this

case examined into, and to see that the lunatic prisoner is properly treated?

No report by the Medical Commissioners is of any avail. It is not to be trusted. The medical inspectors do not seem to understand the difference between idiocy and lunacy—between the entire absence of a function or organ and the diseases of a function or organ. This man A. 2. 11, will, I have no doubt, be able to tell his name, the nature of his offence, the day of the month, the date of the beginning and expiration of his sentence, and answer any ordinary simple question; but that his mind is diseased admits of no doubt. At present it is a horrible duel between himself and the doctor. The doctor is fighting for a theory. The man is fighting for his life. I am anxious that the man should win. But let the whole case be examined into by experts who understand brain-disease, and by people of humane feelings who have still some common-sense and some pity. There is no reason that the sentimentalist should be asked to interfere. He always does harm. He culminates at his starting point. His end, as his origin, is an emotion.

The case is a special instance of the cruelty inseparable from a stupid system, for the present

Governor of Reading is a man of gentle and humane character, greatly liked and respected by all the prisoners. He was appointed in July last, and though he cannot alter the rules of the prison system, he has altered the spirit in which they used to be carried out under his predecessor. He is very popular with the prisoners and with the warders. Indeed he has quite elevated the whole tone of the prison-life. Upon the other hand, the system is of course beyond his reach as far as altering its rules is concerned. I have no doubt that he sees daily much of what he knows to be unjust, stupid, and cruel. But his hands are tied. Of course I have no knowledge of his real views of the case of A. 2. 11, nor, indeed, of any of his views on our present system. I merely judge him by the complete change he brought about in Reading Prison. Under his predecessor the system was carried out with the greatest hardship and stupidity. —I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OSCAR WILDE.

France, May 27, 1897.

Lecture on the English Renaissance.

LECTURE ON THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE.

Among the many debts which we owe to the supreme æsthetic faculty of Goethe is that he was the first to teach us to define beauty in terms the most concrete possible, to realise it, I mean, always in its special manifestations. So, in the lecture which I have the honor to deliver before you, I will not try to give you any abstract definition of beauty, any such universal formula as was sought for by the philosophy of the eighteenth century; still less to communicate to you that which in its essence is incommunicable, the virtue by which a particular picture or poem affects us with a unique or special joy; but rather to point out to you the general ideas which characterise the great English renaissance of art in this century.

The English renaissance has been described as a mere revival of the Greek modes of thought, and again as a mere revival of mediæval feeling;

rather, I would say, that to these forms of the human spirit it has added whatever artistic value the intricacy and complexity and experience of modern life can give. It is from the union of Hellenism in its breadth, its sanity of purpose, its calm possession of beauty, with the adventive, the intensified individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit, that springs out of the nineteenth century in England, as from the marriage of Faust and Helen of Troy sprang the beautiful Lady Euphonia. In the womb of the French revolution, and in the storm and terror of that wild time, tendencies were hidden away that the artistic renaissance bent to her own service when the time came. And that desire for perfection which lay at the base of the revolution found in a young English poet its most complete and flawless realisation. Phidias and the achievements in Greek art are foreshadowed in Homer. Dante prefigures for us the passion and colour and intensity of Italian painting. The modern love of landscape dates from Rousseau, and it is in Keats that one discerns the beginning of the artistic renaissance of England. He was the forerunner of the pre-Raphaelite school, and so of the great romantic wave of which I will speak. Speaking of the pre-Raphael-

ites, what are they? If you ask nine-tenths of the British public, what is the meaning of the word æsthetic, they will tell you that it is the French for affectation or the German for a dado. If you inquire about the pre-Raphaelites, you will hear something about an eccentric lot of young men to whom a sort of divine crookedness and holy awkwardness is drawing all the chief objects of art. To know nothing about their great men is one of the necessary elements of English education.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ART REVOLUTION.

In 1847 a number of young men in London, all admirers of Keats, were in the habit of meeting together and discussing art. They had determined to revolutionise poetry and painting. To do so was to lose, in England, all their rights as citizens. They had those things which the English public never forgives—youth, power and enthusiasm. Satire paid the usual homage which mediocrity yields to genius, blinding the British public to what is noble and beautiful, but harming the artist not at all. To disagree with three-fourths of England on all points is one of the first elements of vanity,

which is a deep source of consolation in all moments of spiritual doubt.

These young men called themselves pre-Raphaelites because, as opposed to the facile abstractions of Raphael they thought they had found a stronger realism of imagination, a more careful realism of technique, an individuality more intense. But of all things was it a return to Nature. Later on, there came to the old house by Blackfriars Bridge, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, who added a more exquisite spirit of choice, a more faultless devotion to beauty, and more intense seeking for perfection. Morris felt that the close imitation of Nature was a disturbing element in imaginative art. To him we owe poetry the perfect precision of which, and the clearness of word and vision, have not been excelled in the literature of our country.

Great eras in the history of arts have been eras not only of increased feeling, but also of new technical improvements. The revolution in modern music has been due to the invention of new instruments entirely. The artist may trace the depressed revolution of Bunthorne simply to the lack of technical means. So it has been with this romantic movement of ours. The painting of

Burne-Jones shows a far more intricate wonder of design and splendour of color than English imaginative art had ever shown before. The poetry of Morris, Rossetti and Swinburne shows a sustaining consciousness of the musical value of each word which Theophile Gautier's advice to the young poet, to read his dictionary every day as being the only book worth a poet's reading, admirably expresses. And yet, what people call the poet's inspiration has not lost its wings; but we have accustomed ourselves to count their innumerable pulsations, to estimate their limitless strength, and to govern their ungovernable freedom.

THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

And now I would point out to you the operation of the artistic spirit in the choice of subject. Like the philosopher of the platonic vision, the poet is the spectator of all time and all existence. For him no form is obsolete, no subject out of date; rather, whatever of life and passion the world has known in the desert of Judea or in Arcadian valley, by the ruins of Troy or Damascus, in the crowded and hideous streets of the modern city, or by the pleasant ways of Camelot, all lies before

him like an open scroll, all is still instinct with beautiful life. He will take of it what is salutary for his own spirit, choosing some facts and rejecting others, with a calm artistic control of one who is in possession of the secret of beauty. It is to no avail that the muse of poetry be called even by such a clarion note as Whitman's to migrate from Greece and Ionia and to placard "removed" and "to let" on the rocks of the snowy Parnassus. For art, to quote a noble passage of Mr. Swinburne's, is very life itself and knows nothing of death. And so it comes that he who seems to stand most remote from his age is he who mirrors it best, because he has stripped life of that mist of familiarity which, as Shelley used to say, makes life obscure to us.

Whatever spiritual message an artist brings to his age, it is for us to do naught but accept his teaching. You have most of you seen probably that great masterpiece of Rubens which hangs in the gallery of Brussels, that swift and wonderful pageant of horse and rider, arrested in its most exquisite and fiery moment, when the winds are caught in crimson banner and the air is lit by the gleam of armour and the flash of plume. Well, that is joy in art, though that golden hillside be

trodden by the wounded feet of Christ; and it is for the death of the Son of Man that that gorgeous cavalcade is passing.

CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE SOUL IS TOUCHED.

In its primary aspect a painting has no more spiritual message than an exquisite fragment of Venetian glass. The channels by which all noble and imaginative work in painting should touch the soul are not those of the truths of lives. This should be done by a certain inventive and creative handling entirely independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject, something entirely satisfying in itself, which is, as the Greeks would say, in itself an end. So the joy of poetry comes never from the subject, but from an inventive handling of rhythmical language.

THE PLACE OF CRITICISM.

What place has criticism in our culture? I think that the first duty of an art critic is to hold his tongue at all times and upon all subjects. You have listened to "Patience" for a hundred nights,

and you have only heard me for one. It will make, no doubt, that satire more piquant by knowing something about the subject of it. But you must not judge of æstheticism by the satire of Mr. Gilbert, any more than you judge of the strength and splendour of sun or sea by the dust that dances in the beam or the bubble that breaks on the wave. Don't take your critic as any sure test of art. For artists, like the Greek gods, are only revealed to one another. As Emerson says somewhere, their real value and place time only can show. The true critic addresses not the artist ever, but the public. His work lies with them. Art can never have any other aim but her own perfection. I have no reverence, said Keats, for the public, or for anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the memory of great men, and the principle of beauty.

Such, then, is the spirit which I believe to be guiding and underlying our English Renaissance, a Renaissance many-sided and wonderful, promotive of strong ambitions and lofty personalities; yet for all its splendid achievements in poetry and the decorative arts, and in painting, for all the increased comeliness and grace of dress and of furniture of houses, not complete. For there can be no great sculpture without a beautiful national

life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that; no great drama without a noble national life, and the commercial spirit of England has killed that, too.

THE NOVEL AND THE DRAMA.

The novel has not killed the play, as some critics would persuade us. The romantic period of France shows that the work of Balzac and of Hugo grew up side by side together—nay, more, were complementary to each other, although neither of them saw it. The drama is the meeting place of art and life; it deals, as Mazzini said, not merely with man, but with social man, with man in relation to God and to humanity. It is the product of a period of great, national, united energy. It is impossible without a noble public, and it belongs to such ages as the age of Elizabeth, at London, Pericles, at Athens. It is part of such lofty moral and spiritual ardour as came to Greece after the defeat of the Persian fleet, and to Englishmen after the wreck of the Armada of Spain.

Shelley felt how incomplete our movement was in this respect, and has shown in one great tragedy by what terror and pity he would have pacified

our age; but in spite of the "Cenci," the drama is one of the artistic forms through which the genius of England seeks in vain an outlet and an expression.

AMERICA TO COMPLETE THE MOVEMENT.

It is rather, perhaps, to you that we would turn to complete and perfect this great movement of ours, for there is something Hellenic in your air and world, something that has a quicker breath of the joy and power of Elizabeth's England about it than our ancient civilisation can give us. For you, at least, are young; no hungry generations tread you down, and the past does not mock you with the ruins of a beauty, the secret of whose creation you have lost. That very absence of tradition which Ruskin thought would rob your rivers of their laughter and your flowers of their light may be rather the source of your freedom and strength. To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude of the movement of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiments of trees and the grass by the roadside, has been defined by one of your poets as the flawless triumph of art; it is a triumph which you above all other nations may be

destined to achieve. For the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there, if you will but listen to them—may yield you the splendour of some new imagination, the marvel of some new liberty.

If, then, this is so, and the materials for a civilisation lie all around you, what profit, you will ask me, will all this study of our poets and painters bring you? I might answer that the intellect can be engaged without a direct, didactic object, on an artistic and historical problem—that the demand of the intellect is merely to feel itself alive. I think such a study will bring you something that is the knowledge of real strength in art, not that you should imitate the works of great men, but their artistic spirit.

WHERE MORALITY IS NOT IN QUESTION.

In nations, as in individuals, if the passion for creation be not accompanied by the critical, the æsthetic faculty also, it will be sure to waste its strength. It is not an increased moral sense or moral supervision that your literature needs. Indeed, one should never talk of a moral or immoral

poem. Poems are either well written or badly written; that is all. Any element of morals or implied reference to a standard of good and evil in art is often a sign of a certain incompleteness of vision. All good work aims at a purely artistic effect. But as in your cities so in your literature, it is an increased sensibility to beauty that is lacking. All noble work is not national merely, but universal. Spiritual freedom your own generous lives and liberal air will give you. From us you will learn the classical restraint of form. Love art for its own sake and then all things that you need will be added to you. This devotion to beauty, and to the creation of beautiful things, is the test of all great civilisations; it is what makes the life of each citizen a sacrament and not a speculation. For beauty is the only thing that time cannot harm. Philosophies fall away like sand, creeds follow one another, but what is beautiful is a joy for all seasons, a possession for all eternity.

Wars there must be always; but I think that creating a common intellectual atmosphere might make men brothers. National hatreds are always strongest where culture is lowest. Great empires there must be as long as personal ambition and the spirit of the age are one; but art is the only

empire which a nation's enemies cannot take from her. We in our Renaissance are seeking to create a sovereignty that will still be England's, when her yellow leopards have grown weary of wars, and the rose on her shield is crimsoned no more with the blood of battle. And you, too, absorbing into the heart of a great people this pervading artistic spirit, will create for yourselves such riches as you have never yet created, though your land be a network of railways, and your cities the harbours of the galleys of the world.

THE REASON OF DECORATIVE ART.

I know indeed that the divine prescience of beauty is not our inheritance. For such an informing and presiding spirit of art to shield us from all harsh and alien influences, we of the Teutonic and Saxon races must turn rather to that strained self-consciousness of the age which is the keynote of all our romantic art, and must be the source of all or nearly all our culture. I mean that intellectual curiosity of the nineteenth century which is always looking for the secret of the life that still lingers around old and bygone forms of culture. The truths of art cannot be taught.

They are revealed only—revealed to natures which have made themselves receptive of all beautiful impressions by the study of and the worship of all beautiful things. Hence the enormous importance given to the decorative arts in our English Renaissance; hence all that marvel of design that comes from the hand of Edward Burne-Jones; hence all that weaving of tapestry, the staining of glass, and the beautiful working in clay and metal and wood.

THE SUNFLOWER AND THE LILY.

You have heard, I think, a few of you, of two flowers connected with the æsthetic movement in England, said (I assure you, erroneously) to be the food of some æsthetic young men. Well, let me tell you that the reason we love the lily and the sunflower, in spite of what Mr. Gilbert may tell you, is not for any vegetable fashion at all; it is because these two lovely flowers are in England the two most perfect models of design, the most naturally adapted for decorative art—the gaudy leonine beauty of the one and the precious loveliness of the other giving to the artist the most entire and perfect joy. And so with you: let there be no flower in your meadows that does not wreathe

its tendrils around your pillows, no little leaf in your Titan forests that does not lend its form to design, no curving spray of wild rose or briar that does not live forever in carven arch or window of marble, no bird in your air that is not giving the iridescent wonder of its colour, the exquisite curves of its wings in flight, to make more precious the preciousness of simple adornment; for the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there in the wonder of wind-swept heights and the majesty of silent deep—messages that, if you will listen to them, will give you the wonder of all new imagination, the treasure of all new beauty. We spend our days, each one of us, in looking for the secret of life. Well, the secret of life is in art.

Wilde v. Whistler.

BEING

An Acrimonious Correspondence on Art

BETWEEN

Oscar Wilde

AND

James McNeil Whistler.

MR. WHISTLER'S TEN O'CLOCK,

BY MR. OSCAR WILDE.

"RENGAINES!"

PALL MALL GAZETTE, Feb. 21, 1885.

Last night, at Prince's Hall, Mr. Whistler made his first public appearance as a lecturer on Art, and spoke for more than an hour with really marvellous eloquence on the absolute uselessness of all lectures of the kind. Mr. Whistler began his lecture with a very pretty *aria* on pre-historic history, describing how in earlier times hunter and warrior would go forth to chase and foray, while the artist sat at home making cup and bowl for their service. Rude imitations of nature they were at first, like the gourd bottle, till the sense of beauty and form developed, and, in all its exquisite proportions, the first vase was fashioned. Then came a higher civilisation of Architecture and

Armchairs, and with exquisite design, and dainty diaper, the useful things of Life were made lovely: and the hunter and warrior lay on the couch when they were tired, and, when they were thirsty, drank from the bowl, and never cared to lose the exquisite proportions of the one, or the delightful ornament of the other: and this attitude of the primitive anthropophagous Philistine formed the text of the lecture, and was the attitude which Mr. Whistler entreated his audience to adopt towards Art. Remembering, no doubt, many charming invitations to wonderful private views, this fashionable assemblage seemed somewhat aghast, and not a little amused, at being told that the slightest appearance among a civilised people of any joy in beautiful things is a grave impertinence to all painters; but Mr. Whistler was relentless, and with charming ease, and much grace of manner, explained to the public that the only thing they should cultivate was ugliness, and that on their permanent stupidity rested all the hopes of art in the future.

The scene was in every way delightful; he stood there, a miniature Mephistopheles mocking the majority! he was like a brilliant surgeon lecturing to a class composed of subjects destined ultimately for dissection, and solemnly assuring them how

valuable to science their maladies were and how absolutely uninteresting the slightest symptoms of health on their part would be. In fairness to the audience, however, I must say that they seemed extremely gratified at being rid of the dreadful responsibility of admiring anything, and nothing could have exceeded their enthusiasm when they were told by Mr. Whistler that no matter how vulgar their dresses were, or how hideous their surroundings at home, still it was possible that a great painter, if there was such a thing, could, by contemplating them in the twilight, and half closing his eyes, see them under really picturesque conditions, and produce a picture which they were not to attempt to understand, much less dare to enjoy. Then there were some arrows, barbed and brilliant, shot off, with all the speed and splendour of fireworks at the archæologists, who spend their lives in verifying the birthplaces of nobodies, and estimate the value of a work of art by its date or decay; at the art critics who always treat a picture as if it were a novel, and try and find out the plot; at dilettanti in general, and amateurs in particular, and (*O mea culpa!*) at dress reformers most of all. "Did not Velasquez paint crinolines? What more do you want?"

Having thus made a holocaust of humanity, Mr. Whistler turned to Nature, and in a few minutes convicted her of the Crystal Palace, Bank Holidays, and a general overcrowding of detail, both in omnibuses and in landscapes; and then, in a passage of singular beauty, not unlike one that occurs in Corot's letters, spoke of the artistic value of dim dawns and dusks, when the mean facts of life are lost in evanescent and exquisite effects, when common things are touched with mystery and transfigured with beauty; when the warehouses become as palaces, and the tall chimneys of the factory seem like campaniles in the silver air.

Finally, after making a strong protest against anybody but a painter judging of painting, and a pathetic appeal to the audience not to be lured by the æsthetic movement into having beautiful things about them, Mr. Whistler concluded his lecture with a pretty passage about Fusiyama on a fan, and made his bow to an audience which he had succeeded in completely fascinating by his wit, his brilliant paradoxes, and, at times, his real eloquence. Of course, with regard to the value of beautiful surroundings, I entirely differ from Mr. Whistler. An artist is not an isolated fact; he is

the resultant of a certain *milieu* and a certain entourage, and can no more be born of a nation that is devoid of any sense of beauty than a fig can grow from a thorn or a rose-blossom from a thistle. That an artist will find beauty in ugliness, *le beau dans l'horrible,* is now a commonplace of the schools, the argot of the atelier, but I strongly deny that charming people should be condemned to live with magenta ottomans and Albert blue curtains in their rooms in order that some painter may observe the side lights on the one and the values of the other. Nor do I accept the dictum that only a painter is a judge of painting. I say that only an artist is a judge of art; there is a wide difference. As long as a painter is a painter merely, he should not be allowed to talk of anything but mediums and megilp, and on those subjects should be compelled to hold his tongue; it is only when he becomes an artist that the secret laws of artistic creation are revealed to him. For there are not many arts, but one art merely: poem, picture, and Parthenon, sonnet and statue—all are in their essence the same, and he who knows one, knows all. But the poet is the supreme artist, for he is the master of colour and form, and the real musician besides,

and is lord over all life and all arts; and so to the poet, beyond all others, are these mysteries known; to Edgar Allan Poe and to Baudelaire, not to Benjamin West and Paul Delaroche. However, I would not enjoy anybody else's pictures unless in a few points I disagreed with them, and Mr. Whistler's lecture last night was, like everything that he does, a masterpiece. Not merely for its clever satire and amusing jests will it be remembered, but for the pure and perfect beauty of many of its passages—passages delivered with an earnestness which seemed to amaze those who had looked on Mr. Whistler as a master of persiflage merely, and had not known him, as we do, as a master of painting also. For that he is indeed one of the very greatest masters of painting, is my opinion. And I may add that in this opinion Mr. Whistler himself entirely concurs.

OSCAR WILDE.

REFLECTION: It is not enough that our simple Sunflower flourish on his "figs"—he has now grafted Edgar Poe on the "rose" tree of the early American Market in "certain milieu" of dry goods and sympathy; and "a certain entourage" of worship and wooden nutmegs.

Born of a Nation, not absolutely "devoid of any sense of beauty."—Their idol—cherished, listened to, and understood!—

Foolish Baudelaire!—Mistaken Mallarmé!

J. A. McN. W.

TENDERNESS IN TITE STREET.

TO THE POET.

THE WORLD.

OSCAR: I have read your exquisite article in the *Pall Mall*. Nothing is more delicate, in the flattery of "the Poet" to "the Painter," than the *naïveté* of "the Poet" in the choice of his Painters —Benjamin West and Paul Delaroche!

You have pointed out that "the Painter's" mission is to find *"le beau dans l'horrible,"* and have left to "the Poet" the discovery of *"l'horrible" dans "le beau!"*

J. A. MCN. WHISTLER.

Chelsea.

TO THE PAINTER:

THE WORLD.

DEAR BUTTERFLY: By the aid of a biographical dictionary, I made the discovery that there were once two painters, called Benjamin West and Paul Delaroche, who rashly lectured upon Art. As of their works nothing at all remains, I conclude that they explained themselves away.

Be warned in time, James; and remain, as I do, incomprehensible. To be great is to be misunderstood.—*Tout à vous,*

OSCAR WILDE.

REFLECTION: I do know a bird who, like Oscar, with his head in the sand, still believes in the undiscovered!

If to be misunderstood is to be great, it was rash in Oscar to reveal the source of his inspirations: the *"Biographical Dictionary."*

J. A. McN. W.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE "NATIONAL ART EXHIBITION."

THE WORLD, Nov. 17, 1886.

GENTLEMEN: I am naturally interested in any effort made among painters to prove that they are alive—but when I find, thrust in the van of your leaders, the body of my dead 'Arry, I know that putrefaction alone can result. When following 'Arry, there comes on Oscar, you finish in farce, and bring upon yourselves the scorn and ridicule of your confrères in Europe.

What has Oscar in common with Art? except that he dines at our tables, and picks from our platters the plums for the pudding he peddles in the provinces. Oscar—the amiable, irresponsible, esurient Oscar—with no more sense of a picture than of the fit of a coat, has the courage of the opinions . . . of others!

With 'Arry and Oscar you have avenged the Academy.

I am, gentlemen, yours obediently,

J. A. McN. WHISTLER.

Letter read at a meeting of this Society, associated for the purpose of Art reform.

Enclosed to the Poet, with a line: "Oscar, you must really keep outside the radius."

J. A. McN. W.

QUAND MÊME!

THE WORLD, Nov. 24, 1886.

Atlas, this is very sad! With our James vulgarity begins at home, and should be allowed to stay there.

A vous,

OSCAR WILDE.

TO WHOM:

"A poor thing," Oscar—"but" for once, I suppose, "your own."

J. A. McN. W.

THE HABIT OF SECOND NATURES.

TRUTH, Jan. 2, 1890.

MOST VALIANT TRUTH: Among your ruthless exposures of the shams of to-day, nothing, I confess, have I enjoyed with a keener relish than your late tilt at that arch-impostor and pest of the period—the all-pervading plagiarist!

I learn, by the way, that in America he may, under the "Law of '84," as it is called, be criminally prosecuted, incarcerated, and made to pick oakum, as he has hitherto picked brains—and pockets!

How was it that, in your list of culprits, you omitted that fattest of offenders—our own Oscar?

His methods are brought again freshly to my mind, by the indefatigable and tardy Romeike, who sends me newspaper cuttings of "Herbert Vivian's Reminiscences," in which, among other entertaining anecdotes, is told at length the Story of Oscar simulating the becoming pride of author, upon a certain evening, in the club of the Academy stu-

dents, and arrogating to himself the responsibility of the lecture, with which, at his earnest prayer, I had, in good fellowship, crammed him, that he might not add deplorable failure to foolish appearance, in his anomalous position, as art expounder, before his clear-headed audience.

He went forth, on that occasion, as my St. John —but, forgetting that humility should be his chief characteristic, and unable to withstand the unaccustomed respect with which his utterances were received, he not only trifled with my shoe, but bolted with the latchet!

Mr. Vivian, in his book, tells us, further on, that lately, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on the "Decay of Lying," Mr. Wilde has deliberately and incautiously incorporated, "without a word of comment," a portion of the well-remembered letter in which, after admitting his rare appreciation and amazing memory, I acknowledged that "Oscar has the courage of the opinions . . . of others!"

My recognition of this, his latest proof of open admiration, I send him in the following little note, which I fancy you may think *à propos* to publish, as an example to your readers, in similar circumstances, of noble generosity in sweet reproof,

tempered, as it should be, to the lamb in his condition:

"Oscar, you have been down the area again, I see!

"I had forgotten you, and so allowed your hair to grow over the sore place. And now, while I looked the other way, you have stolen *your own scalp!* And potted it in more of your pudding.

"Labby has pointed out that, for the detected plagiarist, there is still one way to self-respect (besides hanging himself, of course), and that is for him boldly to declare, 'Je prends mon bien là ou je le trouve.'

"You, Oscar, can go further, and with fresh effrontery, that will bring you the envy of all criminal *confrères,* unblushingly boast, 'Moi, je prends *son* bien là ou je le trouve!'"

J. A. McN. WHISTLER.

Chelsea.

IN THE MARKET PLACE.

TRUTH, Jan. 9, 1890.

SIR: I can hardly imagine that the public are in the very smallest degree interested in the shrill shrieks of "Plagiarism" that proceed from time to time out of the lips of silly vanity or incompetent mediocrity.

However, as Mr. James Whistler has had the impertinence to attack me with both venom and vulgarity in your columns, I hope you will allow me to state that the assertions contained in his letters are as deliberately untrue as they are deliberately offensive.

The definition of a disciple as one who has the courage of the opinions of his master is really too old even for Mr. Whistler to be allowed to claim it; and as for borrowing Mr. Whistler's ideas about Art, the only thoroughly original ideas I have ever heard him express have had reference to his own superiority as a painter over painters greater than himself.

It is a trouble for any gentleman to have to notice the lucubrations of so ill-bred and ignorant a person as Mr. Whistler, but your publication of his insolent letter left me no option in the matter.

I remain, Sir, faithfully yours,

OSCAR WILDE.

PANIC.

TRUTH, Jan. 16, 1890.

O TRUTH: Cowed and humiliated, I acknowledge that our Oscar is at last original! At bay, and sublime in his agony, he certainly has, for once, borrowed from no living author, and comes out in his own true colours—as his own "gentleman."

How shall I stand against his just anger, and his damning allegations! for it must be clear to your readers that, besides his clean polish, as prettily set forth in his epistle, I, alas! am but the "ill-bred and ignorant person," whose "lucubrations" "it is a trouble" for him "to notice."

Still will I, desperate as is my condition, point out that though "impertinent," "venomous," and "vulgar," he claims me as his "master"—and, in the dock, bases his innocence upon such relation between us.

In all humility, therefore, I admit that the outcome of my "silly vanity and incompetent mediocrity" must be the incarnation: "Oscar Wilde."

J. A. MCN. WHISTLER.

Mea culpa! the gods may perhaps forgive and forget.

To you, *Truth*—champion of the truth—I leave the brave task of proclaiming again that the story of the lecture to the students of the Royal Academy was, as I told it to you, no fiction.

In the presence of Mr. Waldo Story did Oscar make his prayer for preparation; and at his table was he entrusted with the materials for his crime.

You also shall again unearth, in the *Nineteenth Century Review* of January, 1889, page 37, the other appropriated property, slily stowed away in an article on "The Decay of Lying"—though why Decay!

To shirk this matter thus is craven, doubtless; but I am awe-stricken and tremble, for truly, "the rage of the sheep is terrible!"

J. A. McN. Whistler.

JUST INDIGNATION.

OSCAR: How dare you! What means the disguise?

Restore those things to Nathan's, and never again let me find you masquerading the streets of my Chelsea in the combined costumes of Kossuth and Mr. Mantalini!

J. A. McN. WHISTLER.

Upon seeing the Poet, in Polish cap and green overcoat, befrogged, and wonderfully befurred.

The Rise of Historical Criticism.

THE RISE OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

Historical criticism nowhere occurs as an isolated fact in the civilisation or literature of any people. It is part of that complex working towards freedom which may be described as the revolt against authority. It is merely one facet of that speculative spirit of an innovation, which in the sphere of action produces democracy and revolution, and in that of thought, is the parent of philosophy and physical science; and its importance as a factor of progress is to be rested not so much on the results it attains to, as on the tone of thought which it represents, and the method by which it works.

Being thus the resultant of forces essentially revolutionary, it is not to be found in the ancient world among the material despotisms of Asia or the stationary civilisation of Egypt. The clay cyl-

inders of Assyria and Babylon, the hieroglyphics of the pyramids, form not history but the material for history.

The Chinese annals, ascending as they do to the barbarous forest life of the nation, are marked with a soberness of judgment, a freedom from invention, which is almost unparalleled in the writings of any people; but the protective spirit which is the characteristic of that people proved as fatal to their literature as to their commerce. Free criticism is as unknown as free trade; while as regards the Hindus, the acute, analytical, and logical mind is directed rather to grammar criticism and philosophy than to history or chronology—indeed, in history their imagination seems to have run wild, legend and fact are so indissolubly mingled together that any attempt to separate them seems vain; if we except the identification of the Greek Sandracottus with the Indian Chandragupta, we have really no clue by which we can test the truth of their writings or examine their method of investigation.

It is among the Hellenic branch of the Indo-Germanic race that history proper is to be found, as well as the spirit of historical criticism; among that wonderful offshoot of the primitive Aryas,

whom we call by the name of Greeks, and to whom, as has been well said, we owe all that moves in the world except the blind forces of nature.

For, from the day when they left the chill table-lands of Tibet, and journeyed, a nomad people, to Ægean shores, the characteristic of their nature has been the search for light, and the spirit of historical criticism is part of that wonderful Aufklärung or illumination of the intellect which seems to have burst on the Greek race like a great flood of light about the sixth century B.C.

L'esprit d'un siecle ne nait pas et ne meurt pas à jour fixé and the first critic is perhaps as difficult to discover as the first man. It is from democracy that the spirit of criticism borrows its intolerance of dogmatic authority, from physical science the alluring analogies of law and order, from philosophy the conception of an essential unity underlying the complex manifestations of phenomena, and it appears first as rather a changed attitude of mind than as a principle of research, and its earliest influences are to be found in the sacred writings.

For men begin to doubt in questions of religion first, and then in matters of more secular interest; and as regards the nature of the spirit of histori-

cal criticism itself in its ultimate development, it is not merely confined to the empirical method of ascertaining whether an event happened or not, but is concerned also with the investigation into the causes of events, the general relations which phenomena of life hold to one another, and in its ultimate development passes into the wider question of the philosophy of history.

Now, while the workings of historical criticism in these two spheres of sacred and uninspired history are essentially manifestations of the same spirit, yet their methods are so different, the canons of evidence so entirely separate, and the motives in each case so unconnected, that it will be necessary, for a clear estimation of the progress of Greek thought, that we should consider these two questions entirely apart from one another. I shall then in both cases take the succession of writers in their chronological order as representing the rational order—not that the succession of time is always the succession of ideas, or that dialectics moves ever in the straight line in which Hegel conceives its advance.

In Greek thought, as elsewhere, there are periods of stagnation and apparent retrogression, yet their intellectual development, not merely in the

question of historical criticism, but in their art, their poetry and their philosophy, seems so essentially normal, so free from all disturbing external influences, so peculiarly rational, that in following in the footsteps of time we shall really be progressing in the order sanctioned by reason.

CHAPTER II.

At an early period in their intellectual development the Greeks reached that critical point in the history of every civilised nation when speculation invades the domain of revealed truth, when the spiritual ideals of the people can no longer be satisfied by the lower, material conceptions of their inspired writers, and when men find it impossible to pour the new wine of free thought into the old bottles of a narrow and a trammeling creed.

From their Aryan ancestors they had received the fatal legacy of a mythology stained with immoral and monstrous stories which strove to hide the rational order of nature in a chaos of miracles, and to mar by imputed wickedness the perfection of God's nature—a very shirt of Nessus in which the Heracles of rationalism barely escaped annihilation. Now while undoubtedly the speculations of Thales, and the alluring analogies of law and order afforded by physical science, were most im-

portant forces in encouraging the rise of the spirit of scepticism, yet it was on its ethical side that the Greek mythology was chiefly open to attack.

It is difficult to shake the popular belief in miracles, but no man will admit sin and immortality as attributes of the Ideal he worships; so the first symptoms of a new order of thought are shown in the passionate outcries of Xenophanes and Heraclitus against the evil things said by Homer of the sons of God; and in the story told by Pythagoras, how that he saw tortured in Hell the "two founders of Greek theology," we can recognise the rise of the "Aufklärung" as clearly as we see the Reformation foreshadowed in the "Inferno" of Dante.

Any honest belief, then, in the plain truth of these stories soon succumbed before the destructive effects of the *à priori* ethical criticism of this school; but the orthodox party, as is their custom, found immediately a convenient shelter under the ægis of the doctrine of metaphors and concealed meanings.

To this allegorical school the tale of the fight around the walls of Troy was a mystery, behind which, as behind a veil, were hidden certain moral and physical truths. The contest between Athena

and Ares was that eternal contest between rational thought and the brute force of ignorance; the arrows which rattled in the quiver of the "Far Darter" were no longer the instruments of vengeance shot from the golden bow of the child of God, but the common rays of the sun, which was itself nothing but a mere inert mass of burning metal.

Modern investigation, with the ruthlessness of Philistine analysis, has ultimately brought Helen of Troy down to a symbol of the dawn. There were Philistines among the Greeks also who saw in the Ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν a mere metaphor for atmospheric power.

Now while this tendency to look for metaphors and hidden meanings must be ranked as one of the germs of historical criticism, yet it was essentially unscientific. Its inherent weakness is clearly pointed out by Plato, who showed that while this theory will no doubt explain many of the current legends, yet, if it is to be appealed to at all, it must be as a universal principle; a position he is by no means prepared to admit.

Like many other great principles, it suffered from its disciples, and furnished its own refutation when the web of Penelope was analysed into a metaphor of the rules of formal logic, the warp

representing the premises, and the woof the conclusion.

Rejecting, then, the allegorical interpretation of the sacred writings as an essentially dangerous method, proving either too much or too little, Plato himself returns to the earlier mode of attack, and rewrites history with a didactic purpose, laying down certain ethical canons of historical criticism. God is good; God is just; God is true; God is without the common passions of men. These are the tests to which we are to bring the stories of the Greek religion.

"God predestines no men to ruin, nor sends destruction on innocent cities; He never walks the earth in strange disguise, nor has to mourn for the death of any well beloved son. Away with the tears for Sarpedon, the lying dream sent to Agamemnon, and the story of the broken covenant!"*

Similar ethical canons are applied to the accounts of the heroes of the days of old, and by the same *à priori* principles Achilles is rescued from the charges of avarice and insolence in a passage which may be recited as the earliest instance of that "whitewashing of great men," as it

*Plato, Rep., B'k II, 380; III., 388; 391.

has been called, which is so popular in our own day, when Catiline and Clodius are represented as honest and far-seeing politicians, when "eine edle und gute Natur" is claimed for Tiberius, and Nero is rescued from his heritage of infamy, as an accomplished *dilettante,* whose moral aberrations are more than excused by his exquisite artistic sense and charming tenor voice.

But besides the allegorising principle of interpretation, and the ethical reconstruction of history, there was a third theory, which may be called the semi-historical, and which goes by the name of Euhemeros, though he was by no means the first to propound it.

Appealing to a fictitious monument which he declared that he had discovered in the Island of Panchaia, and which purported to be a column erected by Zeus, and detailing the incidents of his reign on earth, this shallow thinker attempted to show that the gods and heroes of ancient Greece were "mere ordinary mortals, whose achievements had been a good deal exaggerated and misrepresented," and that the proper canon of historical criticism as regards the treatment of myths was to rationalise the incredible, and to present the plausible residuum as actual truth.

To him and his school, the centaurs, for instance, those mythical sons of the storm, strange links between the lives of men and of animals, were merely some youths from the village of Nephele in Thessaly, distinguished for their sporting tastes; the "living harvest of panoplied knights," which sprang so mystically from the dragon's teeth, a body of mercenary troops supported by the profits on a successful speculation in ivory; and Actæon, an ordinary master of hounds, who, living before the days of subscription, was eaten out of house and home by the expenses of his kennel!

Now, that under the glamour of myth and legend some substratum of historical fact may lie, is a proposition rendered extremely probable by the modern investigations into the workings of the mytho-poeic spirit in post-Christian times. Charlemagne and Roland, St. Francis and William Tell are none the less real personages because their histories are filled with much that is fictitious and incredible, but in all cases what is essentially necessary, is some independent external corroboration, such as is afforded by the mention of Roland and Roncesvalles in the chronicles of Eginhard, or (in the sphere of Greek legend) by the excavations at Hissarlik. But to rob a mythical narrative of its

kernel of supernatural elements, and to present the dry husk thus obtained as historical fact, is, as has been well said, to mistake entirely the true method of investigation and to identify plausibility with truth.

And as regards the critical point urged by Palæphatos, Strabo and Polybios, that pure invention on Homer's part is inconceivable, we may without scruple allow it, for myths, like constitutions, grow gradually, and are not formed in a day. But between a poet's deliberate creation and historical accuracy there is a wide field for the exercise of the mytho-poeic faculty.

This Euhemeristic theory was welcomed as an essentially philosophical and critical method by the unscientific Romans, to whom it was introduced by the poet Ennius, that pioneer of cosmopolitan Hellenicism, and it continued to characterise the tone of ancient thought on the question of the treatment of mythology till the rise of Christianity, when it was turned by such writers as Augustin and Minucius Felix into a formidable weapon of attack on Paganism. It was then abandoned by all those who still bent the knee to Athena or to Zeus, and a general return, aided by the philosophic mystics of Alexandria, to the allegorising

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principle of interpretation took place, as the only means of saving the deities of Olympus from the Titan assaults of the new Galilean God; in what vain defence, the statue of Mary set in the heart of the Pantheon can best tell us.

Religions, however, may be absorbed, but they never are disproved, and the stories of the Greek mythology, spiritualised by the purifying influence of Christianity, reappear in many of the southern parts of Europe in our own day. The old fable that the Greek gods took service with the new religion under assumed names has more truth in it than the many care to discover.

Having now traced the progress of historical criticism in the special treatment of myth and legend, I shall proceed to investigate the form in which the same spirit manifested itself as regards what one may term secular history and secular historians. The field traversed will be found to be in some respects the same, but the mental attitude, the spirit, the motive, of investigation are all changed.

There were heroes before the son of Atreus, and historians before Herodotus, yet the latter is rightly hailed as the father of history, for in him we discover not merely the empirical connection of

cause and effect, but that constant reference to Laws, which is the characteristic of the historian proper.

For all history must be essentially universal; not in the sense of comprising all the synchronous events of the past time, but through the universality of the principles employed. And the great conceptions which unify the work of Herodotus are such as even modern thought has not yet rejected. The immediate government of the world by God, the nemesis and punishment which sin and pride invariably bring with them, the revealing of God's purpose to His people by signs and omens, by miracles and by prophecy; these are to Herodotus the laws which govern the phenomena of history. He is essentially the type of the supernatural historian; his eyes are ever strained to discern the Spirit of God moving over the face of the waters of life; he is more concerned with final than with efficient causes.

Yet we can discern in him the rise of that *historic sense* which is the rational antecedent of the science of historical criticism, the *φυσικὸν κριτήριον*, to use the words of a Greek writer, as opposed to that which comes either *Τέχνη* or *Διδάχη*.

He has passed through the valley of faith and has caught a glimpse of the sun-lit heights of Reason; but like all those who, while accepting the supernatural, yet attempt to apply the canons of rationalism, he is essentially inconsistent. For the better apprehension of the character of this historic sense in Herodotus it will be necessary to examine at some length the various forms of criticism in which it manifests itself.

Such fabulous stories as that of the Phœnix, of the goat-footed men, of the headless beings with eyes in their breasts, of the men who slept six months in the year (*Τούτο οὐκ ἐνδέχομαι τὴν ἀρχήν*), of the wehr-wolf of the Neuri, and the like, are entirely rejected by him as being opposed to the ordinary experience of life, and to those natural laws whose universal influence the early Greek physical philosophers had already made known to the world of thought. Other legends, such as the suckling of Cyrus by a bitch, or the feather-rain of northern Europe, are rationalised and explained into a woman's name and a fall of snow. The supernatural origin of the Scythian nation from the union of Hercules and the monstrous Echidna is set aside by him for the more probable account that they were a nomad tribe driven by the Mas-

sagetæ from Asia; and he appeals to the local names of their country as proof of the fact that Kimmerians were the original possessors.

But in the case of Herodotus it will be more instructive to pass on from points like these to those questions of general probability, the true apprehension of which depends rather on a certain quality of mind than on any possibility of formulated rules; questions which form no unimportant part of scientific history, for it must be remembered always that the canons of historical criticism are essentially different from those of judicial evidence, for they cannot, like the latter, be made plain to every ordinary mind, but appeal to a certain historical faculty founded on the experience of life. Besides, the rules for the reception of evidence in courts of law are purely stationary, while the science of historical probability is essentially progressive, and changes with the advancing spirit of each age.

Now, of all the speculative canons of historical criticism, none is more important than that which rests on psychological probability.

Arguing from his knowledge of human nature, Herodotus rejects the presence of Helen within the walls of Troy. Had she been there, he says,

Priam and his kinsmen would never have been so mad (*φρενοβλαβεῖς*) as not to give her up, when they and their children and their city were in such peril (II, 118); and as regards the authority of Homer, some incidental passages in his poem show that he knew of Helen's sojourn in Egypt during the siege, but selected the other story as being a more suitable motive for an epic. Similarly, he does not believe that the Alcmaeonidæ, a family who had always been the haters of tyranny (*μισοτυράννοι*), and to whom, even more than to Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Athens owed its liberty, would ever have been so treacherous as to hold up a shield after the battle of Marathon as a signal for the Persian host to fall on the city. A shield, he acknowledges, was held up, but it could not possibly have been done by such friends of liberty as the house of Alcmaeon; nor will he believe that a great king like Rhampsinitos would have sent his daughter *Κατίσαι ἐπ' οἰκημάτος*.

Elsewhere he argues from more general considerations of probability; a Greek courtesan like Rhodopis would hardly have been rich enough to build a pyramid, and besides, on chronological grounds, the story is impossible (II, 134).

In another passage (II, 63) after giving an ac-

count of the forcible entry of the priests of Ares into the chapel of the god's mother, which seems to have been a sort of religious faction fight where sticks were freely used (*μάχη ξύλοισι καρτερή*), "I feel sure," he says, "that many of them died from getting their heads broken, notwithstanding the assertions of the Egyptian priests to the contrary." There is also something charmingly naive in the account he gives of the celebrated Greek Swimmer who dived a distance of eighty stadia to give his countrymen warning of the Persian advance. "If, however," he says, "I may offer an opinion on the subject, I would say that he came in a boat."

There is, of course, something a little trivial in some of the instances I have quoted, but in a writer like Herodotus, who stands on the border land between faith and rationalism, one likes to note even the most minute instances of the rise of the critical and sceptical spirit of enquiry.

How really strange, at base, it was with him may, I think, be best shown by a reference to those passages where he applies rationalistic tests to matters connected with religion. He nowhere, indeed, grapples with the moral and scientific difficulties of the Greek bible, and where he rejects as incred-

ible the marvellous achievements of Hercules in Egypt, he does so on the express grounds that he had not yet been received among the gods, and so was still subject to the ordinary conditions of mortal life (ἔτι ἄνθρωπον ἐόντα).

Even within these limits, however, his religious conscience seems to have been troubled at such daring rationalism, and the passage (II, 45) concludes with a pious hope that God will pardon him for having gone so far. The great rationalistic passage being, of course, that in which he rejects the mythical account of the foundation of Dodona. "How can a dove speak with a human voice?" he asks, and rationalises the bird into a foreign priestess.

Similarly, he seems more inclined to believe that the great storm at the beginning of the Persian War ceased from ordinary atmospheric causes, and not in consequence of the incantations of the *Magians*. He calls Melampus, whom the majority of the Greeks looked on as an inspired prophet, "a clever man who had acquired for himself the art of prophecy;" and as regards the miracle told of the Æginetan statues of the primæval deities of Damia and Auxesia, that they fell on their knees when the sacrilegious Athenians strove to carry

them off, "any one may believe it," he says, "who likes, but as for myself, I place no credence in the tale."

So much, then, for the rationalistic spirit of historical criticism, as far as it appears explicitly in the works of this great and philosophic writer; but for an adequate appreciation of his position we must also note how conscious he was of the value of documentary evidence, of the use of inscriptions, of the importance of the poets as throwing light on manners and customs as well as on historical incidents. No writer of any age has more vividly recognised the fact that history is a matter of evidence, and that it is as necessary for the historian to state his authority as it is to produce one's witnesses in a court of law.

While, however, we can discern in Herodotus the rise of an historic sense, we must not blind ourselves to the large amount of instances where he receives supernatural influences as part of the ordinary forces of life. Compared to Thucydides, who succeeded him in the development of history, he appears almost like a mediæval writer matched with a modern rationalist. For, contemporary though they were, between these two authors there is an infinite chasm of thought.

The essential difference of their methods may be best illustrated from those passages where they treat of the same subject. The execution of the Spartan heralds of Nicolaus and Aneristus during the Peloponnesian war is regarded by Herodotus as one of the most supernatural instances of the workings of nemesis and the wrath of an outraged hero; while the lengthened siege and ultimate fall of Troy was brought about, the avenging hand of God desiring to manifest unto men the mighty penalties which always follow upon mighty sins. But Thucydides either sees not, or desires not to see, in either of these events the finger of Providence, or the punishment of wicked doers. The death of the heralds is merely an Athenian retaliation for similar outrages committed by the opposite side; the long agony of the ten years' siege is merely due to the want of a good commissariat in the Greek army; while the fall of the city is the result of a united military attack consequent on a good supply of provisions.

Now it is to be observed that in this latter passage, as well as elsewhere, Thucydides is in no sense of the word a sceptic as regards his attitude towards the truth of these ancient legends.

Agamemnon and Atreus, Theseus and Eurys-

theus, even Minos, about whom Herodotus had some doubts, are to him as real personages as Alcibiades or Gylippus. The points in his historical criticism of the past are, first, his rejection of all extra-natural interference; and secondly, the attributing to these ancient heroes the motives and modes of thought of his own day. The present was to him the key to the explanation of the past, as it was to the prediction of the future.

Now as regards his attitude towards the supernatural he is at one with modern science. We, too, know that, just as the primæval coal beds reveal to us the traces of rain-drops and other atmospheric phenomena similar to those of our own day, so in estimating the history of the past, the introduction of no force must be allowed whose workings we cannot observe among the phenomena around us. To lay down canons of ultra-historical credibility for the explanation of events which happen to have preceded us by a few thousand years is as thoroughly unscientific as it is to intermingle præter-natural in geological theories.

Whatever the canons of art may be, no difficulty in history is so great as to warrant the introduction of a *θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς*, in the sense of a violation of the laws of nature.

Upon the other point, however, Thucydides falls into an anachronism. To refuse to allow the workings of chivalrous and self-denying motives among the knights of the Trojan crusade, because he saw none in the faction-loving Athenian of his own day, is to show an entire ignorance of the various characteristics of human nature developing under different circumstances, and to deny to a primitive chieftain like Agamemnon that authority founded on opinion, to which we give the name of Divine right, is to fall into an historical error quite as gross as attributing to Atreus the courting of the populace (*τεθεραπευκότα τὸν δῆμον*) with a view to the Mykenæan throne.

The general method of historical criticism pursued by Thucydides having been thus indicated, it remains to proceed more into detail as regards those particular points where he claims for himself a more rational method of estimating evidence than either the public or his predecessors possessed.

"So little pains," he remarks, "do the vulgar take in the investigation of truth, satisfied with their preconceived opinions," that the majority of the Greeks believe in a Pitanate cohort of the Spartan army and in a double vote being the prerogative of the Spartan kings, neither of which

opinions has any foundation in fact. But the chief point on which he lays stress as evincing the "uncritical way with which men receive legends, even the legends of their own country, is the entire baselessness of the common Athenian tradition in which Harmodius and Aristogeiton were represented as the patriotic liberators of Athens from the Peisistratid tyranny. So far, he points out, from the love of freedom being their motive, both of them were influenced by merely personal considerations, Aristogeiton being jealous of Hipparchus' attention to Harmodius, then a beautiful boy in the flower of Greek loveliness, while the latter's indignation was roused by an insult offered to his sister by the prince.

Their motives, then, were personal revenge, while the result of their conspiracy only served to rivet still more tightly the chains of servitude which bound Athens to the Peisistratid house, for Hipparchus, whom they killed, was only the tyrant's younger brother, and not the tyrant himself.

To prove his theory that Hippias was the elder, he appeals to the evidence afforded by a public inscription in which his name occurs immediately after that of his father, a point which he thinks shows he was the eldest, and so the heir. This

view he further corroborates by another inscription, on the altar of the Apollo, which mentions the children of Hippias and not those of his brothers; "for it was natural for the eldest to be married first"; and besides this, on the score of general probability he points out that, had Hippias been the younger, he would not have so easily obtained the tyranny on the death of Hipparchus.

Now, what is important in Thucydides, as evinced in the treatment of legend generally, is not the results he arrived at, but the method by which he works. The first great rationalistic historian, he may be said to have paved the way for all those who followed after him, though it must always be remembered that, while the total absence in his pages of all the mystical paraphernalia of the supernatural theory of life is an advance in the progress of rationalism, and an era in scientific history, whose importance could never be overestimated, yet we find along with it a total absence of any mention of those various social and economical features which form such important factors in the evolution of the world, and to which Herodotus rightly gave great prominence in his immortal work. The history of Thucydides is essentially one-sided and incomplete. The intri-

cate details of sieges and battles, subjects with which the historian proper has really nothing to do except so far as they may throw light on the spirit of the age, we would readily exchange for some notice of condition of private society in Athens, or the influence and position of women.

There is an advance in the method of historical criticism; there is an advance in the conception and motive of history itself; for in Thucydides we may discern that natural reaction against the intrusion of didactic and theological considerations into the sphere of the pure intellect, the spirit of which may be found in the Euripidean treatment of tragedy, and the later schools of art, as well as in the Platonic conception of science.

History, no doubt, has splendid lessons for our instruction, just as all good art comes to us as the herald of the noblest truth. But to set before either the painter or the historian, the inculcation of moral lessons as an aim to be consciously pursued, is to entirely miss the true motive and characteristic of both art and history, which is in the one case the creation of beauty, in the other the discovery of the laws of the evolution of progress: *"Il ne faut demander de l'Art que l'Art, du passé que le passé."*

Herodotus wrote to illustrate the wonderful ways of Providence and the nemesis that falls on sin, and his work is a good example of the truth that nothing can dispense with criticism so much as a moral aim. Thucydides has no creed to preach, no doctrine to prove. He analyses the results which follow inevitably from certain antecedents, in order that on a recurrence of the same crises men may know how to act.

His object was to discover the laws of the past so as to serve as a light to illumine the future. We must not confuse the recognition of the utility of history with any ideas of a didactic aim. Two points more in Thucydides remain for our consideration: his treatment of the rise of Greek civilisation, and of the primitive condition of Hellas, as well as the question how far can he be really said to have recognised the existence of laws regulating the complex phenomena of life.

CHAPTER III.

The investigation into the two great problems of the origin of society and the philosophy of history occupies such an important position in the evolution of Greek thought, that to obtain any clear view of the workings of the critical spirit it will be necessary to trace at some length their rise and scientific development, as evinced not merely in the works of historians proper, but also in the philosophical treatises of Plato and Aristotle. The important position which these two great thinkers occupy in the progress of historical criticism can hardly be overestimated. I do not mean merely as regards their treatment of the Greek bible, and Plato's endeavours to purge sacred history of its immorality by the application of ethical canons at the time when Aristotle was beginning to undermine the basis of miracles by his scientific conception of law, but with reference

to these two wider questions of the rise of civil institutions and the philosophy of history.

And first, as regards the current theories of the primitive condition of society, there was a wide divergence of opinion in Hellenic society, just as there is now, for while the majority of the orthodox public, of whom Hesiod may be taken as the representative, looked back as a great many of our own day still do, to a fabulous age of innocent happiness, a "bell' eta dell' auro," when sin and death were unknown, and men and women were like gods, the foremost men of intellect, such as Aristotle and Plato, Æschylus, and many of the other poets,* saw in primitive man "a few small sparks of humanity preserved on the tops of mountains after some deluge," "without an idea of cities, governments, or legislation," "living the lives of wild beasts in sunless caves," "their only law being the survival of the fittest."

And this, too, was the opinion of Thucydides, whose "Archæologia," as it is called, contains a most valuable disquisition on the early condition of Hellas, which it will be necessary to examine at some length.

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*Plato's Laws; Æschylus' Prometheus Bound.

Now, as regards the means employed generally by Thucydides for the elucidation of ancient history, I have already pointed out how that, while acknowledging that "it is the tendency of every poet to exaggerate, as it is of every chronicler to seek to be attractive at the expense of truth," he yet assumes in the thoroughly Euhemeristic way, that under the veil of myth and legend there does yet exist a rational basis of fact discoverable by the method of rejecting all supernatural interference as well as any extraordinary motives influencing the actors. It is in complete accordance with this spirit that he appeals, for instance, to the Homemric epithet of ἀψνεῖος, as applied to Corinth, as a proof of the early commercial prosperity of that city; to the fact of the generic name *Hellenes* not occurring in the Iliad as a corroboration of his theory of the essentially disunited character of the primitive Greek tribes; and he argues from the line "O'er many islands and all Argos ruled," as applied to Agamemnon, that his forces must have been partially naval, "for Agamemnon's was a continental power, and he could not have been master of any but the adjacent islands, and these would not be many but through the possession of a fleet."

Anticipating in some measure the comparative method of research, he argues from the fact of the more barbarous Greek tribes, such as the Ætolians and Acarnanians, still carrying arms in his own day, that this custom was the case originally over the whole country. "The fact," he says, "that the people in these parts of Hellas are still living in the old way, points to a time when the same mode of life was equally common to all." Similarly, in another passage he shows how a corroboration of his theory of the respectable character of piracy in ancient days is afforded by "the honour with which some of the inhabitants of the continent still regard a successful marauder," as well as by the fact that the question, "Are you a pirate?" is a common feature of primitive society, as shown in the poets; and finally, after observing how the old Greek custom of wearing belts in gymnastic contests still survived among the more uncivilised Asiatic tribes, he observes that "there are many other points in which a likeness may be shown between the life of the primitive Hellenes and that of the barbarians of to-day."

As regards the evidence afforded by ancient remains, while adducing as a proof of the insecure character of early Greek society, the fact of their

cities* being always built at some distance from the sea, he is yet careful to warn us, and the caution ought to be borne in mind by all archæologists, that we have no right to conclude from the scanty remains of any city that its legendary greatness in primitive times was a mere exaggeration. We are not justified, he says, in rejecting the tradition of the magnitude of Trojan armament, because Mykenæ and the other towns of that age seem to us small and insignificant. For, if Lacedæmon was to become desolate, any antiquarian judging merely from its ruins, would be inclined to regard the tale of the Spartan hegemony as an idle myth; for the city is a mere collection of villages after the old fashion of Hellas, and has none of those splendid public buildings and temples which characterise Athens, and whose remains in the case of the latter city would be so marvellous as to lead the superficial observer into an exaggerated estimate of the Athenian power. Nothing can be more scientific than the archæological canons here laid down, whose truth

*Note.—Somewhat in the same spirit Plato, in his laws, appeals to the local position of Ilion, among the rivers of the plain, as a proof that it was not built till long after the Deluge.

is so strikingly illustrated to any one who has compared the waste fields of the Eurotas plain with the lordly monuments of the Athenian acropolis.*

On the other hand, Thucydides is quite conscious of the value of the positive evidence afforded by archæological remains. He appeals, for instance, to the character of the armour found in the Delian tombs and the peculiar mode of sepulture, as corroboration of his theory of the predominance of the Carian element among the primitive islanders, and to the concentration of all the temples either in the Acropolis, or in its immediate vicinity, to the name of ἄστυ by which it was still known, and to the extraordinary sanctity of the spring of water there, as proof that the primitive city was originally confined to the citadel, and the district immediately beneath it. (B'k II, 16.) And lastly, in the very opening of his history, anticipating one of the most scientific of modern

*Note.—Plutarch remarks that the *only* evidence Greece possesses of the truth that the legendary power of Athens is no "romance or idle story," is the public and sacred buildings. This is an instance of the exaggerated importance given to ruins, against which Thucydides is warning us.

methods, he points out how in early states of civilisation immense fertility of the soil tends to favour the personal aggrandisement of individuals, and so to stop the normal progress of the country, through "the rise of factions, that endless source of ruin"; and also by the allurements it offers to a foreign invader, to necessitate a continual change of population, one immigration following on another. He exemplifies his theory by pointing to the endless political revolutions that characterised Arcadia, Thessaly, and Bœotia, the three richest spots in Greece, as well as by the negative instance of the undisturbed state in primitive time of Attica, which was always remarkable for the dryness and poverty of its soil.

Now, while undoubtedly in these passages we may recognise the first anticipation of many of the most modern principles of research, we must remember how essentially limited is the range of the *Archæologia,* and how no theory at all is offered on the wider questions of the general conditions of the rise and progress of humanity, a problem which is first scientifically discussed in the "Republic" of Plato.

And at the outset it must be premised that, while the study of primitive man is an essentially

inductive science, resting rather on the accumulation of evidence than on speculation, among the Greeks it was prosecuted rather on deductive principles. Thucydides did indeed avail himself of the opportunities afforded by the unequal development of civilisation in his own day in Greece, and in the places I have pointed out seems to have anticipated the comparative method. But we do not find later writers availing themselves of the wonderfully accurate and picturesque accounts given by Herodotus of the customs of savage tribes. To take one instance, which bears a good deal on modern questions, we find in the works of this great traveller the gradual and progressive steps in the development of the family life clearly manifested in the mere gregarious herding together of the Agathyrsi, their primitive kinsmanship through women common, and the rise of a feeling of paternity from a state of polyandry. This tribe stood at that time on that border land between umbilical relationship and the family, which has been such a difficult point for modern anthropologists to find.

The ancient authors, however, are unanimous in insisting that the family is the ultimate unit of society, though, as I have said, an inductive study of primitive races, or even the accounts given of

them by Herodotus, would have shown them that the *νεοττιὰ ἴδια* of a personal household, to use Plato's expression, is really a most complex notion appearing always in a late stage of civilisation, along with recognition of private property and the rights of individualism.

Philology also, which in the hands of modern investigators has proved such a splendid instrument of research, was in ancient days studied on too unscientific principles to be of much use. Herodotus points out that the word *Eridanos* is essentially Greek in character, that consequently the river supposed to run round the world is probably a mere Greek invention. His remarks, however, on language generally, as in the case of *Piromis* and the ending of the Persian names, show on what unsound basis his knowledge of language rested.

In the Bacchæ of Euripides there is an extremely interesting passage in which the immoral stories of the Greek mythology are accounted for on the principle of that misunderstanding of words and metaphors, to which modern science has given the name of a disease of language. In answer to the impious rationalism of Pentheus—a sort of modern Philistine—Teiresias, who may be termed the

Max Müller of the Theban cycle, points out that the story of Dionysos being enclosed in Zeus' thigh really rose from the linguistic confusion between *μηρὸς* and *ὅμηρος*.

On the whole, however, for I have only quoted these two instances to show the unscientific character of early philology, we may say that this important instrument in recreating the history of the past was not really used by the ancients as a means of historical criticism. Nor did the ancients employ that other method, used to such advantage in our own day, by which in the symbolism and formulas of an advanced civilisation we can detect the unconscious survival of ancient customs; for whereas, in the sham capture of the bride at the marriage feast, which was common in Wales till a recent time, we can discern the lingering reminiscence of the barbarous habit of exogamy, the ancient writers saw only the deliberate commemoration of an historical event.

Aristotle does not tell us by what method he discovered that the Greeks used to buy their wives in primitive times, but judging by his general principles, it was probably through some legend or myth on the subject which lasted to his own day, and not as we would do, by arguing back

from the marriage presents given to the bride and her relatives.*

Three passages in Plutarch's life of Theseus will illustrate this point very clearly, which it is necessary to dwell on at some length, as it is essentially a question of *method.*

The origin of the common proverb "worth so many beeves," in which we discern the unconscious survival of a purely pastoral state of society before the use of metals was known, is ascribed by Plutarch to the fact of Theseus having coined money bearing a bull's head. Similarly, the Amathusian festival, in which a young man imitated the labours of a woman in travail, is regarded by him as a rite instituted in Ariadne's honour, and the Carian adoration of asparagus, as a simple commemoration of the adventure of the nymph Perigune. In the first of these *we* discern the beginning of agnation and kinsmanship through the father, which still lingers in the "couvee" of New Zealand tribes; while the second is a relic of the totem and fetish worship of plants.

Now, in entire opposition to this modern in-

*Note.—The fictitious sale in the Roman marriage *per co-emptionem* was originally, of course, a real sale.

ductive principle of research, stands the philosopher Plato, whose account of primitive man is entirely speculative and deductive.

The origin of society he ascribes to necessity, the mother of all inventions, and imagines that individual men began deliberately to herd together on account of the advantages of the principle of division of labour and the rendering of mutual need.

It must, however, be borne in mind that Plato's object in this whole passage in the "Republic" was perhaps, not so much to analyse the conditions of early society, as to illustrate the importance of the division of labour, the shibboleth of his political economy, by showing what a powerful factor it must have been in the most primitive as well as in the most complex states of society; just as in the "Laws" he almost rewrites entirely the history of the Peloponnesos in order to prove the necessity of a balance of power. He surely, I mean, must have recognised himself how essentially incomplete his theory was in taking no account of the origin of family life, the position and influence of women, and other social questions, as well as in disregarding those deeper motives of religion, which are such important factors in early civilisation, and whose influence Aristotle seems

to have clearly apprehended, when he says that the aim of primitive society was not merely life, but the higher life, and that in the origin of society utility is not the sole motive, but that there is something spiritual in it, if, at least, spiritual will bring out the meaning of that complex expression τὸ καλόν. Otherwise the whole account in the "Republic" of primitive man will always remain as a warning against the intrusion of *à priori* speculations in the domain appropriate to induction.

Now, Aristotle's theory of the origin of society, like his philosophy of ethics, rests ultimately on the principle of final causes, not in the theological meaning of an aim or tendency imposed from without, but in the scientific sense of function corresponding to organ. "Nature maketh no thing in vain" is the text of Aristotle in this as in other enquiries. Man being the only animal possessed with the power of rational speech, is, he asserts, by nature intended to be social, more so than the bee or any other gregarious creature.

He is φύσει πολιτικός, and the natural tendency towards higher forms of perfection brings the "armed savage who used to sell his wife" to the free independence of a free state, and to the ἰσότης

τοῦ ἄοχειν καὶ τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι, which was the test of true citizenship. The stages passed through by humanity start with the family first as the ultimate unit.

The conglomeration of families forms a village ruled by that patriarchal sway which is the oldest form of government in the world, as is shown by the fact that all men count it to be the constitution of Heaven, and the villages are merged into the state, and here the progression stops.

For Aristotle, like all Greek thinkers, found his ideal within the walls of the πόλις, yet perhaps in his remark that a united Greece would rule the world we may discern some anticipation of that "federal union of free states into one consolidated empire," which, more than the πόλις, is to our eyes the ultimately perfect polity.

How far Aristotle was justified in regarding the family as the ultimate unit, with the materials afforded to him by Greek literature, I have already noticed. Besides, Herodotus, I may remark, had he reflected on the meaning of that Athenian law, which, while prohibiting marriage with a uterine sister, permitted it with a sister-germane, or, on the common tradition in Athens that before the

time of Cecrops children always bore their mothers' names, or, on some of the Spartan regulations, he could hardly have failed to see the universality of kinsmanship through women in early days, and the late appearance of monandry. Yet, while he missed this point, in common, it must be acknowledged, with many modern writers, such as Sir Henry Maine, it is essentially as an explorer of inductive instances that we recognise his improvement on Plato. The treatise *περὶ πολιτείων*, did it remain to us in its entirety, would have been one of the most valuable landmarks in the progress of historical criticism, and the first scientific treatise on the science of comparative politics.

A few fragments still remain to us,* in one of which we find Aristotle appealing to the authority of an ancient inscription on the "Disk of Iphitus," one of the most celebrated Greek antiquities, to corroborate his theory of the Lycurgean revival of the Olympian festival; while his enormous research is evinced in the elaborate explanation he gives of the historical origin of proverbs, such as *"οὐδεῖς μέγας κακὸς ἰχθῦς,"* of religious songs like the

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*Recent discoveries in Egypt have given to us almost all of this precious work.—[Ed.]

"ἰῶμεν ἐς Ἀθήνας" of the Botticean virgins, or the praises of love and war.

And finally it is to be observed how much wider than Plato's, his theory of the origin of society is. They both rest on a psychological basis, but Aristotle's recognition of the capacity for progress and the tendency towards a higher life shows how much deeper his knowledge of human nature was.

In imitation of these two philosophers, Polybius gives an account of the origin of society in the opening of his philosophy of history. Somewhat in the spirit of Plato, he imagines that after one of the cyclic deluges which sweep off mankind at stated periods and annihilate all pre-existing civilisation, the few surviving members of humanity coalesce for mutual protection, and, as is the case with ordinary animals, the one most remarkable for physical strength is elected king. In a short time, owing to the workings of sympathy and the desire of approbation, the moral qualities begin to make their appearance, and intellectual instead of bodily excellence becomes the qualification for sovereignty.

Other points, as the rise of law and the like, are dwelt on in a somewhat modern spirit, and although Polybius seems not to have employed

the inductive method of research in this question, yet his accounts of early society, or rather, I should say, of the hierarchical order of the rational progress of ideas in life, are not far removed from what the laborious investigations of modern travellers have given us.

And, indeed, as regards the working of the speculative faculty in the creation of history, it is in all respects marvellous how that the most truthful accounts of the passage from barbarism to civilisation in ancient literature come from the works of poets. The elaborate researches of Mr. Taylor and Sir John Lubbock have done little more than verify the theories put forward in the *Prometheus Bound* and the *De Natura Rerum;* yet neither Æschylus nor Lucretius followed in the modern path, but rather attained to truth by a certain almost mystic power of creative imagination, such as we now seek to banish from science as a dangerous power, though to it science seems to owe many of its most splendid generalities.*

Leaving, then, the question of the origin of society as treated by the ancients, I shall now turn

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*Note.—Notably, of course, in the case of heat and its laws.

to the other and the more important question of how far they may be said to have attained to what we call the philosophy of history.

Now, at the outset we must note that, while the conceptions of Law and Order have been universally received as the governing principles of the phenomena of nature in the sphere of physical science, yet their intrusion into the domain of history, and the life of man, has always been met with a strong opposition, on the ground of the incalculable nature of two great forces acting on human action, a certain causeless spontaneity which men call free will, and the extra-natural interference which they attribute as a constant attribute to God.

Now, that there is a science of the apparently variable phenomena of history, is a conception which *we* have perhaps only recently begun to appreciate; yet, like all other great thoughts, it seems to have come to the Greek mind spontaneously, through a certain splendour of imagination, in the morning tide of their civilisation, before inductive research had armed them with the instruments of verification. For I think it is possible to discern in some of the mystic speculations of the early Greek thinkers that desire to discover

what is that "invariable existence of which there are variable states," and to incorporate in some one formula the law which may serve to explain the different manifestations of all organic bodies, *man included,* which is the germ of the philosophy of history; the germ indeed of an idea, of which it is not too much to say that on it any kind of historical criticism, worthy of the name, must ultimately rest.

For the very first requisite for any scientific conception of history is the doctrine of uniform sequence: in other words, that certain events having happened, certain other events corresponding to them will happen also; that the past is the key of the future.

Now, at the birth of this great conception science, it is true, presided, yet religion it was which at the outset clothed it in its own garb, and familiarised men with it by appealing to their hearts first and then to their intellects; knowing that at the beginning of things, it is through the moral nature, and not through the intellectual, that great truths are spread.

So in Herodotus, who may be taken as a representative of the orthodox tone of thought, the idea of the uniform sequence of cause and effect

appears under the theological aspect of Nemesis and Providence; which is really the scientific conception of law, only it is viewed from an *ethical* standpoint.

Now, in Thucydides the philosophy of history rests on the probability which the uniformity of human nature affords us, that the future will, in the course of human things, resemble the past, if not reproduce it. He appears to contemplate a recurrence of the phenomena of history as equally certain with a return of the epidemic of the Great Plague.

Notwithstanding what German critics have written on the subject, we must beware of regarding this conception as a mere reproduction of that cyclic theory of events, which sees in the world nothing but the regular rotation of Strophé and Antistrophé, in the eternal choir of life and death.

For in his remarks on the excesses of the Corcyræan Revolution, Thucydides distinctly rests his idea of the recurrence of history on the psychological grounds of the general sameness of mankind.

"The sufferings," he says, "which revolution entailed upon the cities were many and terrible, such as have occurred, and always will occur, as

long as human nature remains the same, though in a severer or milder form, and varying in their symptoms according to the variety of the particular cases.

"In peace and prosperity states and individuals have better sentiments, because they are not confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes away the easy supply of men's wants, and so proves a hard taskmaster, which brings most men's characters to a level with their fortunes."

The Truth of Masks.

A Note on Illusion.

THE TRUTH OF MASKS.

In many of the somewhat violent attacks that have recently been made on that splendour of mounting which now characterises our Shakespearian revivals in England it seems to have been tacitly assumed by the critics that Shakespeare himself was more or less indifferent to the costume of his actors, and that, could he see Mrs. Langtry's production of *Antony and Cleopatra,* he would probably say that the play, and the play only, is the thing, and that everything else is leather and prunella. While, as regards any historical accuracy in dress, Lord Lytton, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century,* has laid it down as a dogma of art that archæology is entirely out of place in the presentation of any of Shakespeare's plays, and the attempt to introduce it one of the stupidest pedantries of an age of prigs.

Lord Lytton's position I shall examine later on; but, as regards the theory that Shakespeare did not busy himself much about the costume-wardrobe

of his theatre, anybody who cares to study Shakespeare's method will see that there is absolutely no dramatist of the French, English, or Athenian stage who relies so much for his illusionist effects on the dress of his actors as Shakespeare does himself.

Knowing how the artistic temperament is always fascinated by beauty of costume, he constantly introduces into his plays masques and dances, purely for the sake of the pleasure which they give the eye; and we have still his stage directions for the three great processions in *Henry the Eighth,* directions which are characterised by the most extraordinary elaborateness of detail down to the collars of S.S., and the pearls in Anne Boleyn's hair. Indeed, it would be quite easy for a modern manager to reproduce these pageants absolutely as Shakespeare had them designed; and so accurate were they that one of the Court officials of the time, writing an account of the last performance of the play at the Globe Theatre to a friend, actually complains of their realistic character, notably of the production on the stage of the Knights of the Garter in the robes and insignia of the order, as being calculated to bring ridicule on the real ceremonies; much in the same spirit

in which the French Government, some time ago, prohibited that delightful actor, M. Christian, from appearing in uniform, on the plea that it was prejudicial to the glory of the army that a colonel should be caricatured. And elsewhere the gorgeousness of apparel which distinguished the English stage under Shakespeare's influence was attacked by the contemporary critics, not as a rule, however, on the grounds of the democratic tendencies of realism, but usually on those moral grounds which are always the last refuge of people who have no sense of beauty.

The point, however, which I wish to emphasise is, not that Shakespeare appreciated the value of lovely costumes in adding picturesqueness to poetry, but that he saw how important costume is as a means of producing certain dramatic effects. Many of his plays, such as *Measure for Measure, Twelfth Night, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, All's Well that Ends Well, Cymbeline,* and others, depend for their illusion on the character of the various dresses worn by the hero or the heroine; the delightful scene in *Henry the Sixth,* on the modern miracles of healing by faith, loses all its point unless Gloster is in black and scarlet; and the *dénouement* of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*

hinges on the colour of Anne Page's gown. As for the uses Shakespeare makes of disguises, the instances are almost numberless. Posthumus hides his passion under a peasant's garb, and Edgar his pride beneath an idiot's rags; Portia wears the apparel of a lawyer, and Rosalind is attired, "in all points, as a man"; the cloak-bag of Pisanio changes Imogen to the youth Fidele; Jessica flees from her father's house in boy's dress, and Julia ties up her yellow hair in fantastic love-knots, and dons hose and doublet; Henry the Eighth woos his lady as a shepherd, and Romeo his as a pilgrim; Prince Hal and Poins appear first as footpads in buckram suits, and then in white aprons and leather jerkins as the waiters in a tavern; and as for Falstaff, does he not come on as a highwayman, as an old woman, as Herne the Hunter, and as the clothes going to the laundry?

Nor are the examples of the employment of costume as a mode of intensifying dramatic situation less numerous. After the slaughter of Duncan, Macbeth appears in his nightgown, as if aroused from sleep; Timon ends in rags the play he had begun in splendour; Richard flatters the London citizens in a suit of mean and shabby armour, and, as soon

as he has stepped in blood to the throne, marches through the streets in crown and George and Garter; the climax of the *Tempest* is reached when Prospero, throwing off his enchanter's robes, sends Ariel for his hat and rapier, and reveals himself as the great Italian Duke; the very Ghost in *Hamlet* changes his mystical apparel to produce different effects; and as for Juliet, a modern playwright would probably have laid her out in her shroud, and made the scene a scene of horror merely; but Shakespeare arrays her in rich and gorgeous raiment, whose loveliness makes the vault "a feasting presence full of light," turns the tomb into a bridal chamber, and gives the cue and motive for Romeo's speech of the triumph of Beauty over Death.

Even small details of dress, such as the colour of a major-domo's stockings, the pattern on a wife's handkerchief, the sleeve of a young soldier, and a fashionable woman's bonnets, become in Shakespeare's hands points of actual dramatic importance, and by some of them the action of the play in question is conditioned absolutely. Many other dramatists have availed themselves of costume as a method of expressing directly to the audience the character of a person on his entrance, though

hardly so brilliantly as Shakespeare has done in the case of the dandy Parolles, whose dress, by the way, only an archæologist can understand; the fun of a master and servant exchanging coats in presence of the audience, of shipwrecked sailors squabbling over the division of a lot of fine clothes, and of a tinker dressed up like a duke while he is in his cups, may be regarded as part of that great career which costume has always played in comedy from the time of Aristophanes down to Mr. Gilbert; but nobody, from the mere details of apparel and adornment, has ever drawn such irony of contrast, such immediate and tragic effect, such pity and such pathos, as Shakespeare himself. Armed cap-à-pié, the dead King stalks on the battlements of Elsinore because all is not right with Denmark; Shylock's Jewish gaberdine is part of the stigma under which that wounded and embittered nature writhes; Arthur begging for his life can think of no better plea than the handkerchief he had given Hubert—

Have you the heart? when your head did but ache,
I knit my handkerchief about your brows,
(The best I had, a princess wrought it me)
And I did never ask it you again.

and Orlando's blood-stained napkin strikes the first sombre note in that exquisite woodland idyll, and shows us the depth of feeling that underlies Rosalind's fanciful wit and wilful jesting.

> **Last night 'twas on my arm; I kissed it;**
> **I hope it be not gone to tell my lord**
> **That I kiss aught but he,**

says Imogen, jesting on the loss of the bracelet which was already on its way to Rome to rob her of her husband's faith; the little Prince passing to the Tower plays with the dagger in his uncle's girdle; Duncan sends a ring to Lady Macbeth on the night of his own murder, and the ring of Portia turns the tragedy of the merchant into a wife's comedy. The great rebel York dies with a paper crown on his head; Hamlet's black suit is a kind of colour-motive in the piece, like the mourning of the Chimène in the *Cid;* and the climax of Antony's speech is the production of Cæsar's cloak:—

> **I remember**
> **The first time ever Cæsar put it on.**
> **'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,**
> **The day he overcame the Nervii:—**
> **Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:**
> **See what a rent the envious Casca made:**

> Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed . . .
> Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold
> Our Cæsar's vesture wounded?

The flowers which Ophelia carries with her in her madness are as pathetic as the violets that blossom on a grave; the effect of Lear's wandering on the heath is intensified beyond words by his fantastic attire; and when Cloten, stung by the taunt of that simile which his sister draws from her husband's raiment, arrays himself in that husband's very garb to work upon her the deed of shame, we feel that there is nothing in the whole of modern French realism, nothing even in *Thérèse Raquin,* that masterpiece of horror, which for terrible and tragic significance can compare with this strange scene in *Cymbeline.*

In the actual dialogue, also, some of the most vivid passages are those suggested by costume. Rosalind's

> Dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?

Constance's

> Grief fills the place up of my absent child,
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;

and the quick, sharp cry of Elizabeth—

Ah! cut my lace asunder!

are only a few of the many examples one might quote. One of the finest effects I have ever seen on the stage was Salvini, in the last act of *Lear*, tearing the plume from Kent's cap and applying it to Cordelia's lips when he came to the line,

This feather stirs; she lives!

Mr. Booth, whose Lear had many noble qualities of passion, plucked, I remember, some fur from his archæologically incorrect ermine for the same business; but Salvini's was the finer effect of the two, as well as the truer. And those who saw Mr. Irving in the last act of *Richard the Third* have not, I am sure, forgotten how much the agony and terror of his dream was intensified, by contrast, through the calm and quiet that preceded it, and the delivery of such lines as

What, is my beaver easier than it was?
And all my armour laid into my tent?
Look that my staves be sound and not too heavy—

lines which had a double meaning for the audience, remembering the last words which Richard's mother called after him as he was marching to Bosworth:—

> Therefore take with thee my most grievous curse,
> Which in the day of battle tire thee more
> Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st.

As regards the resources which Shakespeare had at his disposal, it is to be remarked that, while he more than once complains of the smallness of the stage on which he has to produce big historical plays, and of the want of scenery which obliges him to cut out many effective open-air incidents, he always writes as a dramatist who had at his disposal a most elaborate theatrical wardrobe, and who could rely on the actors taking pains about their make-up. Even now it is difficult to produce such a play as the *Comedy of Errors;* and to the picturesque accident of Miss Ellen Terry's brother resembling herself, we owe the opportunity of seeing *Twelfth Night* adequately performed. Indeed, to put any play of Shakespeare's on the stage, absolutely as he himself wished it to be done, requires the services of a good property-man, a clever wig-maker, a costumier with a sense of colour and

Perdita and Florizel

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a knowledge of textures, a master of the methods of making-up, a fencing master, a dancing master, and an artist to personally direct the whole production. For he is most careful to tell us the dress and appearance of each character. "Racine abhorre la réalité," says Auguste Vacquerie somewhere; "il ne daigne pas s'occuper de son costume. Si l'on s'en rapportait aux indications du poète, Agamemnon serait vêtu d'un sceptre et Achille d'une épée." But with Shakespeare it is very different. He gives us directions about the costumes of Perdita, Florizel, Autolycus, the Witches in *Macbeth,* and the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet,* several elaborate descriptions of his fat knight, and a detailed account of the extraordinary garb in which Petruchio is to be married. Rosalind, he tells us, is tall, and is to carry a spear and a little dagger; Celia is smaller, and is to paint her face brown so as to look sunburnt. The children who play at fairies in Windsor Forest are to be dressed in white and green—a compliment, by the way, to Queen Elizabeth, whose favourite colours they were—and in white, with green garlands and gilded visors, the angels are to come to Katharine in Kimbolton. Bottom is in homespun, Lysander is distinguished from Oberon by his wear-

ing an Athenian dress, and Launce has holes in his boots. The Duchess of Gloucester stands in a white sheet with her husband in mourning beside her. The motley of the Fool, the scarlet of the Cardinal, and the French lilies broidered on the English coats, are all made occasion for jest or taunt in the dialogue. We know the patterns on the Dauphin's armour and the Pucelle's sword, the crest on Warwick's helmet, and the colour of Bardolph's nose. Portia has golden hair, Phœbe is black-haired, Orlando has chestnut curls, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek's hair hangs like flax on a distaff, and won't curl at all. Some of the characters are stout, some lean, some straight, some hunchbacked, some fair, some dark, and some are to blacken their faces. Lear has a white beard, Hamlet's father a grizzled, and Benedict is to shave his in the course of the play. Indeed, on the subject of stage beards, Shakespeare is quite elaborate; tells us of the many different colours in use, and gives a hint to actors to always see that their own are properly tied on. There is a dance of reapers in rye-straw hats, and of rustics in hairy coats like satyrs; a masque of Amazons, a masque of Russians, and a classical masque; several immortal scenes over a weaver in an ass's

head, a riot over the colour of a coat which it takes the Lord Mayor of London to quell, and a scene between an infuriated husband and his wife's milliner about the slashing of a sleeve.

As for the metaphors Shakespeare draws from dress, and the aphorisms he makes on it, his hits at the costume of his age, particularly at the ridiculous size of the ladies' bonnets, and the many descriptions of the *mundus muliebris*, from the song of Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale* down to the account of the Duchess of Milan's gown in *Much Ado About Nothing*, they are far too numerous to quote; though it may be worth while to remind people that the whole of the Philosophy of Clothes is to be found in Lear's scene with Edgar —a passage which has the advantage of brevity and style over the grotesque wisdom and somewhat mouthing metaphysics of *Sartor Resartus*. But I think that from what I have already said it is quite clear that Shakespeare was very much interested in costume. I do not mean in that shallow sense by which it has been concluded from his knowledge of deeds and daffodils that he was the Blackstone and Paxton of the Elizabethan age; but that he saw that costume could be made at once impressive of a certain effect on the audience

and expressive of certain types of character, and is one of the essential factors of the means which a true illusionist has at his disposal. Indeed, to him the deformed figure of Richard was of as much value as Juliet's loveliness; he sets the serge of the radical beside the silks of the lord, and sees the stage effects to be got from each: he has as much delight in Caliban as he has in Ariel, in rags as he has in cloth of gold, and recognises the artistic beauty of ugliness.

The difficulty Ducis felt about translating *Othello* in consequence of the importance given to such a vulgar thing as a handkerchief, and his attempt to soften its grossness by making the Moor reiterate "Le bandeau! le bandeau!" may be taken as an example of the difference between *la tragédie philosophique* and the drama of real life; and the introduction for the first time of the word *mouchoir* at the Théâtre Français was an era in that romantic-realistic movement of which Hugo is the father and M. Zola the *enfant terrible*, just as the criticism of the earlier part of the century was emphasised by Talma's refusal to play Greek heroes any longer in a powdered periwig—one of the many instances, by the way, of that de-

sire for archæological accuracy in dress which has distinguished the great actors of our age.

In criticising the importance given to money in *La Comédie Humaine,* Théophile Gautier says that Balzac may claim to have invented a new hero in fiction, *le héros métallique.* Of Shakespeare it may be said that he was the first to see the dramatic value of doublets, and that a climax may depend on a crinoline.

The burning of the Globe Theatre—an event due, by the way, to the results of the passion for illusion that distinguished Shakespeare's stage management—has, unfortunately, robbed us of many important documents; but in the inventory, still in existence, of the costume-wardrobe of a London theatre in Shakespeare's time, there are mentioned particular costumes for cardinals, shepherds, kings, clowns, friars, and fools; green coats for Robin Hood's men, and a green gown for Maid Marian; a white and gold doublet for Henry the Fifth, and a robe for Longshanks; besides surplices, copes, damask gowns, gowns of cloth of gold and cloth of silver, taffeta gowns, calico gowns, velvet coats, satin coats, frieze coats, jerkins of yellow leather and of black leather, red suits, grey suits, French Pierrot suits, a robe "for

to goo invisibell," which seems inexpensive at 3*l.* 10*s.*, and four incomparable fardingales—all of which show a desire to give every character an appropriate dress. There are also entries of Spanish, Moorish, and Danish costumes, of helmets, lances, painted shields, imperial crowns, and papal tiaras, as well as of costumes for Turkish Janissaries, Roman Senators, and all the gods and goddesses of Olympus, which evidence a good deal of archæological research on the part of the manager of the theatre. It is true that there is a mention of a bodice for Eve, but probably the *donnée* of the play was after the Fall.

Indeed, anybody who cares to examine the age of Shakespeare will see that archæology was one of its special characteristics. After that revival of the classical forms of architecture which was one of the notes of the Renaissance, and the printing at Venice and elsewhere of the masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature, had come naturally an interest in the ornamentation and costume of the antique world. Nor was it for the learning that they could acquire, but rather for the loveliness that they might create, that the artists studied these things. The curious objects that were being constantly brought to light by excavations

were not left to moulder in a museum, for the contemplation of a callous curator, and the *ennui* of a policeman bored by the absence of crime. They were used as motives for the production of a new art, which was to be not beautiful merely, but also strange.

Infessura tells us that in 1485 some workmen digging on the Appian Way came across an old Roman sarcophagus inscribed with the name "Julia, daughter of Claudius." On opening the coffer they found within its marble womb the body of a beautiful girl of about fifteen years of age, preserved by the embalmer's skill from corruption and the decay of time. Her eyes were half open, her hair rippled round her in crisp, curling gold, and from her lips and cheek the bloom of maidenhood had not yet departed. Borne back to the Capitol, she became at once the centre of a new cult, and from all parts of the city crowded pilgrims to worship at the wonderful shrine, till the Pope, fearing lest those who had found the secret of beauty in a Pagan tomb might forget what secrets Judæa's rough and rock-hewn sepulchre contained, had the body conveyed away by night, and in secret buried. Legend though it may be, yet the story is none the less valuable

as showing us the attitude of the Renaissance towards the antique world. Archæology, to them, was not a mere science for the antiquarian; it was a means by which they could touch the dry dust of antiquity into the very breath and beauty of life, and fill with the new wine of romanticism forms that else had been old and outworn. From the pulpit of Niccola Pisano down to Mantegna's "Triumph of Cæsar," and the service Cellini designed for King Francis, the influence of this spirit can be traced; nor was it confined merely to the immobile arts—the arts of arrested movement—but its influence was to be seen also in the great Græco-Roman masques which were the constant amusement of the gay courts of the time, and in the public pomps and processions with which the citizens of big commercial towns were wont to greet the princes who chanced to visit them; pageants, by the way, which were considered so important that large prints were made of them and published—a fact which is a proof of the general interest at the time in matters of such kind.

And this use of archæology in shows, so far from being a bit of priggish pedantry, is in every way legitimate and beautiful. For the stage is

not merely the meeting place of all the arts, but is also the return of art to life. Sometimes in an archæological novel the use of strange and obsolete terms seems to hide the reality beneath the learning, and I dare say that many of the readers of *Notre Dame de Paris* have been much puzzled over the meaning of such expressions as *la casaque à mahoitres, les voulgiers, le gallimard taché d'encre, les craaquiniers,* and the like; but with the stage how different it is! The ancient world wakes from its sleep, and history moves as a pageant before our eyes, without obliging us to have recourse to a dictionary or an encyclopædia for the perfection of our enjoyment. Indeed, there is not the slightest necessity that the public should know the authorities for the mounting of any piece. From such materials, for instance, as the disc of Theodosius, materials with which the majority of people are probably not very familiar, Mr. E. W. Godwin, one of the most artistic spirits of this century in England, created the marvellous loveliness of the first act of *Claudian,* and showed us the life of Byzantium in the fourth century, not by a dreary lecture and a set of grimy casts, not by a novel which requires a glossary to explain it, but by the visible presentation before us of

all the glory of that great town. And while the costumes were true to the smallest points of colour and design, yet the details were not assigned that abnormal importance which they must necessarily be given in a piecemeal lecture, but were subordinated to the rules of lofty composition and the unity of artistic effect. Mr. Symonds, speaking of that great picture of Mantegna's, now in Hampton Court, says that the artist has converted an antiquarian motive into a theme for melodies of line. The same could have been said with equal justice of Mr. Godwin's scene. Only the foolish called it pedantry, only those who would neither look nor listen spoke of the passion of the play being killed by its paint. It was in reality a scene not merely perfect in its picturesqueness, but absolutely dramatic also, getting rid of any necessity for tedious descriptions, and showing us, by the colour and character of Claudian's dress, and the dress of his attendants, the whole nature and life of the man, from what school of philosophy he affected, down to what horses he backed on the turf.

And indeed archæology is only really delightful when transfused into some form of art. I have no desire to underrate the services of laborious

scholars, but I feel that the use Keats made of Lemprière's Dictionary is of far more value to us than Professor Max Müller's treatment of the same mythology as a disease of language. Better *Endymion* than any theory, however sound, or, as in the present instance, unsound, of an epidemic among adjectives! And who does not feel that the chief glory of Piranesi's book on Vases is that it gave Keats the suggestion for his "Ode on a Grecian Urn"? Art, and art only, can make archæology beautiful; and the theatric art can use it most directly and most vividly, for it can combine in one exquisite presentation the illusion of actual life with the wonder of the unreal world. But the sixteenth century was not merely the age of Vitruvius; it was the age of Vecellio also. Every nation seems suddenly to have become interested in the dress of its neighbours. Europe began to investigate its own clothes, and the amount of books published on national costumes is quite extraordinary. At the beginning of the century the *Nuremberg Chronicle,* with its two thousand illustrations, reached its fifth edition, and before the century was over seventeen editions were published of Munster's *Cosmography.* Besides these two books there were also the works of Michael Colyns,

of Hans Weigel, of Amman, and of Vecellio himself, all of them well illustrated, some of the drawings in Vecellio being probably from the hand of Titian.

Nor was it merely from books and treatises that they acquired their knowledge. The development of the habit of foreign travel, the increased commercial intercourse between countries, and the frequency of diplomatic missions, gave every nation many opportunities of studying the various forms of contemporary dress. After the departure from England, for instance, of the ambassadors from the Czar, the Sultan, and the Prince of Morocco, Henry the Eighth and his friends gave several masques in the strange attire of their visitors. Later on, London saw, perhaps too often, the sombre splendour of the Spanish Court, and to Elizabeth came envoys from all lands, whose dress, Shakespeare tells us, had an important influence on English costume.

And the interest was not confined merely to classical dress, or the dress of foreign nations; there was also a good deal of research, amongst theatrical people especially, into the ancient costume of England itself: and when Shakespeare, in the prologue of one of his plays, expresses his re-

gret at being unable to produce helmets of the period, he is speaking as an Elizabethan manager and not merely as an Elizabethan poet. At Cambridge, for instance, during his day, a play of *Richard the Third* was performed, in which the actors were attired in real dresses of the time, procured from the great collection of historical costumes in the Tower, which was always open to the inspection of managers, and sometimes placed at their disposal. And I cannot help thinking that this performance must have been far more artistic, as regards costume, than Garrick's mounting of Shakespeare's own play on the subject, in which he himself appeared in a nondescript fancy dress, and everybody else in the costume of the time of George the Third, Richmond especially being much admired in the uniform of a young guardsman.

For what is the use to the stage of that archæology which has so strangely terrified the critics, but that it, and it alone, can give us the architecture and apparel suitable to the time in which the action of the play passes? It enables us to see a Greek dressed like a Greek, and an Italian like an Italian; to enjoy the arcades of Venice and the balconies of Verona; and, if the play deals with any of the great eras in our country's his-

tory, to contemplate the age in its proper attire, and the king in his habit as he lived. And I wonder, by the way, what Lord Lytton would have said some time ago, at the Princess's Theatre, had the curtain risen on his father's Brutus reclining in a Queen Anne chair, attired in a flowing wig and a flowered dressing-gown, a costume which in the last century was considered peculiarly appropriate to an antique Roman! For in those halcyon days of the drama no archæology troubled the stage, or distressed the critics, and our inartistic grandfathers sat peaceably in a stifling atmosphere of anachronisms, and beheld with the calm complacency of the age of prose an Iachimo in powder and patches, a Lear in lace ruffles, and a Lady Macbeth in a large crinoline. I can understand archæology being attacked on the ground of its excessive realism, but to attack it as pedantic seems to be very much beside the mark. However, to attack it for any reason is foolish; one might just as well speak disrespectfully of the equator. For archæology, being a science, is neither good nor bad, but a fact simply. Its value depends entirely on how it is used, and only an artist can use it. We look to the archæologist for the materials, to the artist for the method.

In designing the scenery and costumes for any of Shakespeare's plays, the first thing the artist has to settle is the best date for the drama. This should be determined by the general spirit of the play, more than by any actual historical references which may occur in it. Most *Hamlets* I have seen were placed far too early. *Hamlet* is essentially a scholar of the Revival of Learning; and if the allusion to the recent invasion of England by the Danes puts it back to the ninth century, the use of foils brings it down much later. Once, however, that the date has been fixed, then the archæologist is to supply us with the facts which the artist is to convert into effects.

It has been said that the anachronisms in the plays themselves show us that Shakespeare was indifferent to historical accuracy, and a great deal of capital has been made out of Hector's indiscreet quotation from Aristotle. Upon the other hand, the anachronisms are really few in number, and not very important, and, had Shakespeare's attention been drawn to them by a brother artist, he would probably have corrected them. For, though they can hardly be called blemishes, they are certainly not the great beauties of his work; or, at least, if they are, their anachronistic charm can-

not be emphasised unless the play is accurately mounted according to its proper date. In looking at Shakespeare's plays as a whole, however, what is really remarkable is their extraordinary fidelity as regards his personages and his plots. Many of his *dramatis personæ* are people who actually existed, and some of them might have been seen in real life by a portion of his audience. Indeed, the most violent attack that was made on Shakespeare in his time was for his supposed caricature of Lord Cobham. As for his plots, Shakespeare constantly draws them either from authentic history, or from the old ballads and traditions which served as history to the Elizabethan public, and which, even now, no scientific historian would dismiss as absolutely untrue. And not merely did he select fact instead of fancy as the basis of much of his imaginative work, but he always gives to each play the general character, the social atmosphere in a word, of the age in question. Stupidity he recognises as one of the permanent characteristics of all European civilisations, so he sees no difference between a London mob of his own day and a Roman mob of Pagan days, between a silly watchman in Messina and a silly Justice of the Peace in Windsor. But when he deals with higher

characters, with those exceptions of each age which are so fine that they become its types, he gives them absolutely the stamp and seal of their time. Virgilia is one of those Roman wives on whose tomb was written "Domi mansit, lanam fecit," as surely as Juliet is the romantic girl of the Renaissance. He is even true to the characteristics of race. Hamlet has all the imagination and irresolution of the Northern nations, and the Princess Katharine is as entirely French as the heroine of *Divorçons*. Harry the Fifth is a pure Englishman, and Othello a true Moor.

Again, when Shakespeare treats of the history of England from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, it is wonderful how careful he is to have his facts perfectly right—indeed, he follows Holinshed with curious fidelity. The incessant wars between France and England are described with extraordinary accuracy down to the names of the besieged towns, the ports of landing and embarkation, the sites and dates of the battles, the titles of the commanders on each side, and the lists of the killed and wounded. And as regards the Civil Wars of the Roses, we have many elaborate genealogies of the seven sons of Edward the Third; the claims of the rival Houses of York and

Lancaster to the throne are discussed at length; and if the English aristocracy will not read Shakespeare as a poet, they should certainly read him as a sort of early Peerage. There is hardly a single title in the Upper House, with the exception, of course, of the uninteresting titles assumed by the law lords, which does not appear in Shakespeare, along with many details of family history, creditable and discreditable. Indeed, if it be really necessary that the School Board children should know all about the Wars of the Roses, they could learn their lessons just as well out of Shakespeare as out of shilling primers, and learn them, I need not say, far more pleasurably. Even in Shakespeare's own day this use of his plays was recognised. "The historical plays teach history to those who cannot read it in the chronicles," says Heywood in a tract about the stage, and yet I am sure that sixteenth-century chronicles were much more delightful reading than nineteenth-century primers are.

Of course, the æsthetic value of Shakespeare's plays does not, in the slightest degree, depend on their facts, but on Truth, and Truth is independent of facts always, inventing or selecting them at pleasure. But still Shakespeare's use of facts is

a most interesting part of his method of work, and shows us his attitude towards the stage, and his relations to the great art of illusion. Indeed, he would have been very much surprised at any one classing his plays with "fairy tales," as Lord Lytton does; for one of his aims was to create for England a national historical drama, which should deal with incidents with which the public was well acquainted, and with heroes that lived in the memory of a people. Patriotism, I need hardly say, is not a necessary quality of art; but it means, for the artist the substitution of a universal for an individual feeling, and for the public the presentation of a work of art in a most attractive and popular form. It is worth noticing that Shakespeare's first and last successes were both historical plays.

It may be asked what has this to do with Shakespeare's attitude towards costume. I answer that a dramatist who laid such stress on historical accuracy of fact would have welcomed historical accuracy of costume as a most important adjunct to his illusionist method. And I have no hesitation in saying that he did so. The reference to helmets of the period in the prologue to *Henry the*

Fifth may be considered fanciful, though Shakespeare must have often seen

> **The very casque**
> **That did affright the air at Agincourt,**

where it still hangs in the dusky gloom of Westminster Abbey, along with the saddle of that "imp of fame," and the dinted shield with its torn blue velvet lining and its tarnished lilies of gold; but the use of military tabards in *Henry the Sixth* is a bit of pure archæology, as they were not worn in the sixteenth century; and the King's own tabard, I may mention, was still suspended over his tomb in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, in Shakespeare's day. For, up to the time of the unfortunate triumph of the Philistines in 1645, the chapels and cathedrals of England were the great national museums of archæology, and in them was kept the armour and attire of the heroes of English history. A good deal was, of course, preserved in the Tower, and even in Elizabeth's day tourists were brought there to see such curious relics of the past as Charles Brandon's huge lance, which is still, I believe, the admiration of our country visitors; but the cathedrals and churches were, as a rule, selected as the most suitable shrines

for the reception of the historic antiquities. Canterbury can still show us the helm of the Black Prince, Westminster the robes of our kings, and in old St. Paul's the very banner that had waved on Bosworth field was hung up by Richmond himself.

In fact, everywhere that Shakespeare turned in London, he saw the apparel and appurtenances of past ages, and it is impossible to doubt that he made use of his opportunities. The employment of lance and shield, for instance, in actual warfare, which is so frequent in his plays, is drawn from archæology, and not from the military accoutrements of his day; and his general use of armour in battle was not a characteristic of his age, a time when it was rapidly disappearing before firearms. Again, the crest on Warwick's helmet, of which such a point is made in *Henry the Sixth,* is absolutely correct in a fifteenth-century play, when crests were generally worn, but would not have been so in a play of Shakespeare's own time, when feathers and plumes had taken their place—a fashion which, as he tells us in *Henry the Eighth,* was borrowed from France. For the historical plays, then, we may be sure that archæology was employed, and as for the others, I feel certain it was

the case also. The appearance of Jupiter on his eagle, thunderbolt in hand; of Juno, with her peacocks, and of Iris with her many-coloured bow; the Amazon masque and the masque of the Five Worthies, may all be regarded as archæological; and the vision which Posthumus sees in prison of Sicilius Leonatus—"an old man, attired like a warrior, leading an ancient matron"—is clearly so. Of the "Athenian dress" by which Lysander is distinguished from Oberon, I have already spoken; but one of the most marked instances is in the case of the dress of Coriolanus, for which Shakespeare goes directly to Plutarch. That historian, in his life of the great Roman, tells us of the oak wreath with which Caius Marcius was crowned, and of the curious kind of dress in which, according to the ancient fashion, he had to canvass his electors; and on both of these points he enters into long disquisitions, investigating the origin and meaning of the old customs. Shakespeare, in the spirit of the true artist, accepts the facts of the antiquarian and converts them into dramatic and picturesque effects: indeed the gown of humility, the "woolvish gown," as Shakespeare calls it, is the central note of the play. There are other cases I might quote, but this one is quite suffi-

cient for my purpose; and it is evident from it at any rate that, in mounting a play in the accurate costume of the time, according to the best authorities, we are carrying out Shakespeare's own wishes and method.

Even if it were not so, there is no more reason that we should continue any imperfections which may be supposed to have characterised Shakespeare's stage-mounting, than that we should have Juliet played by a young man, or give up the advantage of changeable scenery. A great work of dramatic art should not merely be made expressive of modern passion by means of the actor, but should be presented to us in the form most suitable to the modern spirit. Racine produced his Roman plays in Louis-Quatorze dress, on a stage crowded with spectators; but we require different conditions for the enjoyment of his art. Perfect accuracy of detail, for the sake of perfect illusion, is necessary for us. What we have to see is that the details are not allowed to usurp the principal place. They must be subordinate always to the general motive of the play. But subordination in art does not mean disregard of truth; it means conversion of fact into effect, and assigning to each detail its proper relative value.

Les petits détails d'histoire et de vie domestique (says Hugo) doivent être scrupuleusement étudiés et reproduits par le poète, mais uniquement comme des moyens d'accroître la réalité de l'ensemble, et de faire pénétrer jusque dans les coins les plus obscurs de l'œuvre cette vie générale et puissante au milieu de laquelle les personnages sont plus vrais, et les catastrophes, par conséquent, plus poignantes. Tout doit être subordonné à ce but. L'Homme sur le premier plan, le reste au fond.

The passage is interesting as coming from the first great French dramatist who employed archæology on the stage, and whose plays, though absolutely correct in detail, are known to all for their passion, not for their pedantry—for their life, not for their learning. It is true that he has made certain concessions in the case of the employment of curious or strange expressions. Ruy Blas talks of M. de Priego as "sujet du roi" instead of "noble du roi," and Angelo Malipieri speaks of "la croix rouge" instead of "la croix de gueules." But they are concessions made to the public, or, rather, to a section of it. "J'en offre ici toute mes excuses aux spectateurs intelligents," he says in a note to one of the plays; "espérons qu'un jour un seigneur vénitien pourra dire tout bonnement sans péril son blason sur le théâtre. C'est un progrès qui vien-

dra." And though the description of the crest is not couched in accurate language, still the crest itself was accurately right. It may, of course, be said that the public do not notice these things; upon the other hand, it should be remembered that Art has no other aim but her own perfection, and proceeds simply by her own laws, and that the play which Hamlet describes as being caviare to the general is a play he highly praises. Besides, in England, at any rate, the public have undergone a transformation; there is far more appreciation of beauty now than there was a few years ago; and though they may not be familiar with the authorities and archæological data for what is shown to them, still they enjoy whatever loveliness they look at. And this is the important thing. Better to take pleasure in a rose than to put its root under a microscope. Archæological accuracy is merely a condition of illusionist stage effect; it is not its quality. And Lord Lytton's proposal that the dresses should merely be beautiful without being accurate is founded on a misapprehension of the nature of costume, and of its value on the stage. This value is twofold—picturesque and dramatic; the former depends on the colour of the dress, the latter on its design and character. But so inter-

woven are the two that, whenever in our own day historical accuracy has been disregarded, and the various dresses in a play taken from different ages, the result has been that the stage has been turned into a chaos of costume, that caricature of the centuries, the Fancy Dress Ball, to the entire ruin of all dramatic and picturesque effect. For the dresses of one age do not artistically harmonise with the dresses of another; and, as far as dramatic value goes, to confuse the costumes is to confuse the play. Costume is a growth, an evolution, and a most important, perhaps the most important, sign of the manners, customs, and mode of life of each century. The Puritan dislike of colour adornment, and grace in apparel, was part of the great revolt of the middle classes against Beauty in the seventeenth century. A historian who disregarded it would give us a most inaccurate picture of the time, and a dramatist who did not avail himself of it would miss a most vital element in producing an illusionist effect. The effeminacy of dress that characterised the reign of Richard the Second was a constant theme of contemporary authors. Shakespeare, writing two hundred years after, makes the King's fondness for gay apparel and foreign fashions a point in the play, from

John of Gaunt's reproaches down to Richard's own speech in the third act on his deposition from the throne. And that Shakespeare examined Richard's tomb in Westminster Abbey seems to me certain from York's speech:—

> **See, see, King Richard doth himself appear,**
> **As doth the blushing discontented sun**
> **From out the fiery portal of the east,**
> **When he perceives the envious clouds are bent**
> **To dim his glory.**

For we can still discern on the King's robe his favourite badge—the sun issuing from a cloud. In fact in every age the social conditions are so exemplified in costume, that to produce a sixteenth-century play in fourteenth-century attire, or *vice versa*, would make the performance seem unreal because untrue. And, valuable as beauty of effect on the stage is, the highest beauty is not merely comparable with absolute accuracy of detail, but really dependent on it. To invent an entirely new costume is almost impossible except in burlesque or extravaganza, and as for combining the dress of different centuries into one, the experiment would be dangerous, and Shakespeare's opinion of the artistic value of such a medley may be gathered

from his incessant satire of the Elizabethan dandies for imagining that they were well dressed because they got their doublets in Italy, their hats in Germany, and their hose in France. And it should be noted that the most lovely scenes that have been produced on our stage have been those that have been characterised by perfect accuracy, such as Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's eighteenth-century revivals at the Haymarket, Mr. Irving's superb production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Mr. Barrett's *Claudian*. Besides, and this is perhaps the most complete answer to Lord Lytton's theory, it must be remembered that neither in costume nor in dialogue is beauty the dramatist's primary aim at all. The true dramatist aims first at what is characteristic, and no more desires that all his personages should be beautifully attired than he desires that they should all have beautiful natures or speak beautiful English. The true dramatist, in fact, shows us life under the conditions of art, not art in the form of life. The Greek dress was the loveliest dress the world has ever seen, and the English dress of the last century one of the most monstrous; yet we cannot costume a play by Sheridan as we would costume a play by Sophocles. For, as Polonius says in his excellent lecture, a

lecture to which I am glad to have the opportunity of expressing my obligations, one of the first qualities of apparel is its expressiveness. And the affected style of dress in the last century was the natural characteristic of a society of affected manners and affected conversation—a characteristic which the realistic dramatist will highly value down to the smallest detail of accuracy, and the materials for which he can only get from archæology.

But it is not enough that a dress should be accurate; it must be also appropriate to the stature and appearance of the actor, and to his supposed condition, as well as to his necessary action in the play. In Mr. Hare's production of *As You Like It*, at the St. James's Theatre, for instance, the whole point of Orlando's complaint that he is brought up like a peasant, and not like a gentleman, was spoiled by the gorgeousness of his dress; and the splendid apparel worn by the banished Duke and his friends was quite out of place. Mr. Lewis Wingfield's explanation that the sumptuary laws of the period necessitated their doing so, is, I am afraid, hardly sufficient. Outlaws, lurking in a forest, and living by the chase, are not very likely to care much about ordinances of dress.

They were probably attired like Robin Hood's men, to whom, indeed, they are compared in the course of the play. And that their dress was not that of wealthy noblemen may be seen by Orlando's words when he breaks in upon them. He mistakes them for robbers, and is amazed to find that they answer him in courteous and gentle terms. Lady Archibald Campbell's production, under Mr. E. W. Godwin's direction, of the same play in Coombe Wood was, as regards mounting, far more artistic. At least it seemed so to me. The Duke and his companions were dressed in serge tunics, leathern jerkins, high boots, and gauntlets, and wore by-cocket hats and hoods. And as they were playing in a real forest, they found, I am sure, their dresses extremely convenient. To every character in the play was given a perfectly appropriate attire, and the brown and green of their costumes harmonised exquisitely with the ferns through which they wandered, the trees beneath which they lay, and the lovely English landscape that surrounded the Pastoral Players. The perfect naturalness of the scene was due to the absolute accuracy and appropriateness of everything that was worn. Nor could archæology have been put to a severer test, or come out of it more triumphantly.

The whole production showed once for all that, unless a dress is archæologically correct, and artistically appropriate, it always looks unreal, unnatural, and theatrical in the sense of artificial.

Nor, again, is it enough that there should be accurate and appropriate costumes of beautiful colours: there must be also beauty of colour on the stage as a whole, and as long as the background is painted by one artist, and the foreground figures independently designed by another, there is the danger of a want of harmony in the scene as a picture. For each scene the colour scheme should be settled as absolutely as for the decoration of a room, and the textures which it is proposed to use should be mixed and remixed in every possible combination, and what is discordant removed. Then, as regards the particular kinds of colours, the stage is often made too glaring, partly through the excessive use of hot, violent reds, and partly through the costumes looking too new. Shabbiness, which in modern life is merely the tendency of the lower orders towards tone, is not without its artistic value, and modern colours are often much improved by being a little faded. Blue also is too frequently used: it is not merely a dangerous colour to wear by gaslight, but it is really diffi-

cult in England to get a thoroughly good blue. The fine Chinese blue, which we all so much admire, takes two years to dye, and the English public will not wait so long for a colour. Peacock blue, of course, has been employed on the stage, notably at the Lyceum, with great advantage; but all attempts at a good light blue, or good dark blue, which I have seen, have been failures. The value of black is hardly appreciated; it was used effectively by Mr. Irving in *Hamlet* as the central note of a composition, but as a tone-giving neutral its importance is not recognised. And this is curious, considering the general colour of the dress of a century in which, as Beaudelaire says, "Nous célébrons tous quelque enterrement." The archæologist of the future will probably point to this age as a time when the beauty of black was understood; but I hardly think that, as regards stage mounting or house decoration, it really is. Its decorative value is, of course, the same as that of white or gold; it can separate and harmonise colours. In modern plays the black frock coat of the hero becomes important in itself, and should be given a suitable background. But it rarely is. Indeed, the only good background for a play in modern dress which I have ever seen was the dark

grey and cream-white scene of the first act of the *Princesse Georges* in Mrs. Langtry's production. As a rule, the hero is smothered in *bric-à-brac* and palm trees, lost in the gilded abyss of Louis Quatorze furniture, or reduced to a mere midge in the midst of marqueterie; whereas the background should always be kept as a background, and colour subordinated to effect. This, of course, can only be done when there is one single mind directing the whole production. The facts of art are diverse, but the essence of artistic effect is unity. Monarchy, Anarchy, and Republicanism may contend for the government of nations; but a theatre should be in the power of a cultured despot. There may be division of labour, but there must be no division of mind. Whoever understands the costume of an age understands of necessity its architecture and its surroundings also, and it is easy to see from the chairs of a century whether it was a century of crinolines or not. In fact, in art there is no specialism, and a really artistic production should bear the impress of one master, and one master only, who not merely should design and arrange everything, but should have complete control over the way in which each dress is to be worn.

Mademoiselle Mars, in the first production of *Hernani,* absolutely refused to call her lover *"Mon Lion!"* unless she was allowed to wear a little fashionable *toque* then much in vogue on the Boulevards; and many young ladies on our own stage insist to the present day on wearing stiff starched petticoats under Greek dresses, to the entire ruin of all delicacy of line and fold; but these wicked things should not be allowed. And there should be far more dress rehearsals than there are now. Actors such as Mr. Forbes-Robertson, Mr. Conway, Mr. George Alexander, and others, not to mention older artists, can move with ease and elegance in the attire of any century; but there are not a few who seem dreadfully embarrassed about their hands if they have no side pockets, and who always wear their dresses as if they were costumes. Costumes, of course, they are to the designer; but dresses they should be to those that wear them. And it is time that a stop should be put to the idea, very prevalent on the stage, that the Greeks and Romans always went about bareheaded in the open air—a mistake the Elizabethan managers did not fall into, for they gave hoods as well as gowns to their Roman senators.

More dress rehearsals would also be of value in

explaining to the actors that there is a form of gesture and movement that is not merely appropriate to each style of dress, but really conditioned by it. The extravagant use of the arms in the eighteenth century, for instance, was the necessary result of the large hoop, and the solemn dignity of Burleigh owed as much to his ruff as to his reason. Besides, until an actor is at home in his dress, he is not at home in his part.

Of the value of beautiful costume in creating an artistic temperament in the audience, and producing that joy in beauty for beauty's sake without which the great masterpieces of art can never be understood, I will not here speak; though it is worth while to notice how Shakespeare appreciated that side of the question in the production of his tragedies, acting them always by artificial light, and in a theatre hung with black; but what I have tried to point out is that archæology is not a pedantic method, but a method of artistic illusion, and that costume is a means of displaying character without description, and of producing dramatic situations and dramatic effects. And I think it is a pity that so many critics should have set themselves to attack one of the most important movements on the modern stage before that move-

ment has at all reached its proper perfection. That it will do so, however, I feel as certain as that we shall require from our dramatic critics in the future higher qualifications than that they can remember Macready or have seen Benjamin Webster: we shall require of them, indeed, that they cultivate a sense of beauty. *Pour être plus difficile, la tâche n'en est que plus glorieuse.* And if they will not encourage, at least they must not oppose, a movement of which Shakespeare, of all dramatists, would have most approved, for it has the illusion of truth for its method, and the illusion of beauty for its result. Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in æsthetic criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true. And just as it is only in art criticism, and through it, that we can apprehend the Platonic theory of ideas, so it is only in art criticism, and through it, that we can realise Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks.

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